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FROM SERVICES TO IDEOLOGICAL FORMATION: BUILDING COMMUNITY AGENCY  
IN PALESTINE

BY

TAHREER ABED ARAJ

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human and Community Development  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Gale Summerfield, Chair  
Professor Stephen Gasteyer  
Professor Ann Reisner  
Professor Soo Ah Kwon  
Professor Brian Dill  
Professor Robert Hughes

## ABSTRACT

This research project examines the extent to which delivery of services provided by grassroots non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can lead to progressive community change. While locally grounded in the socio-political context of Palestine, this research addresses broader questions concerning the role of organizational ideology in community and social changes specifically in the Middle East. This is carried out through researching the efforts of Palestinian NGOs whose mission is to improve the economic, social and political conditions of rural Palestinian women, farmers and youth, and to assist in community capacity building at various institutional levels. A six-month ethnographic case study was conducted of two prominent, well-established Palestinian grassroots NGOs that have been working in the agricultural sector for more than 20 years in West Bank: PARC (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees) and UAWC (Union of Agriculture Working Committees). This case study involved the following specific actions: reviews and content analysis of annual reports; in-depth individual interviews; group discussion; and participant observation at the organizational and local community levels. Findings illustrate how the allocation of donor funds serves neoliberal purposes by co-opting left-leaning ideologies throughout certain acquiescences through the support of technical assistance-based community development, which does little to challenge existing power structures. The acquiescences and discourses of these organizations shape the orientation of grassroots NGOs and as a result inform the performance and roles of practitioners in these NGOs. Accordingly two different operating rationales or frameworks evolve in which the community development practitioner's work can be identified in these grassroots NGOs: the professional and the activist. Each framework is linked to or influences the practitioners' orientation and therefore the community development efforts to promote community progressive

change. Findings also demonstrate gender mainstreaming within grassroots NGOs and the commitment to gender equity and social justice at a substantive level, which is represented in their mission statements, as well as their policies and goals. However, the structural level doesn't reveal the process of social transformation and is tied to project implementation in different ways.

*To the Memory of my Mum and Dad*  
*and to those Currently Uprising for Our More Just Arab World*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of people and organizations made this dissertation possible or, at least, better than it would otherwise have been. My sincere gratitude to my participants, who not only gave me their time and wisdom, but who also trusted me enough to submit themselves to my analysis. I hope I have done justice to their ideas and aspirations.

My dissertation committee consisted of extraordinary talented and well-respected scholars who took an active interest in this project. I would like to thank also my supervisors, Gale Summerfield and Stephen Gasteyer, for their insight and enthusiasm. Keith Taylor has been very supportive throughout this project. I am particularly very grateful for his encouragement, taking the time to discuss my ideas, and read and edit my draft of my dissertation. I would like to thank Elham Sami, Elham Salameh and Stephanie Yousef for their great support. Funding for the six months of fieldwork in West Bank- Palestine upon which this thesis is based was provided by Palestinian American Research Center (PARC), Middle East Research Center (MERC), Margaret McNamara Memorial Fund educational grant and dissertation travel award, Graduate College at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

Finally on my personal level, I owe so much to my friends and comrades for their incredible support throughout my writing, and for trusting in me enough to let me follow my instincts in this project.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### *The Palestinian Context*

The current situation in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip illustrates the need for Palestinians to establish grassroots organization development efforts. Since the start of the Israeli occupation in 1967, the economic status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) has been an income economy rather than a production economy — making the WBGS extremely dependent upon the Israeli labor and goods market, with little to no diversification. In the aftermath of the Intifada of 2000, economic conditions have deteriorated in the WBGS according to a joint food security assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Program (WFP) (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2007). The analysis shows that almost 40% of the West Bank is now taken up by Israeli infrastructure. It also demonstrates how roads linking settlements to Israel, in conjunction with an extensive system of checkpoints and roadblocks, have fragmented Palestinian communities.

The worsening of socio-economic conditions in the West Bank has been detailed in United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and World Bank reports over the past several years (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2007). Such socio-economic deterioration is more acute in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, contrastingly, Palestinians are subject to more sophisticated means of socio-economic deterioration in the forms of housing demolition, infractions in land rights, and violent military interventions that have damaged the already degraded infrastructure in the region. Severe restrictions on movement of goods and people in and out of the WBGS into Israel since the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000 have negatively impacted the lives of the Palestinian



population. The isolation of markets, widespread unemployment, and a rising economic crisis are continuously causing massive decline in the standard of living for WBGS residents.

Unemployment rates have steadily increased, reaching an unprecedented level of 31% in mid-2002. These rates have since leveled off, but remain comparatively high, hovering around 24% in the WBGS (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Palestinians are facing a situation where the occupying force is controlling almost every aspect of the occupied Palestinian society in the occupied territories.

Between 1967 and 1992, more than 1,300 military orders were issued to regulate Palestinian life in the West Bank. Of these military orders, approximately one-third relate to economic issues, including agriculture, land ownership, infrastructure development, water resources, tariffs and taxation, and business licensing (Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, 1995). Many of these regulations imposed additional costs, placing Palestinians at a comparative disadvantage to Israeli producers who often enjoy freer access to Palestinian markets.

Water scarcity is a major concern in the West Bank where, access to and control over water resources is a constant struggle. In accordance to international law, a significant part of the water sources that Israel uses to meet its needs, including that of the settlements, should be shared equitably and reasonably by both Israelis and Palestinians. Israeli per capita water consumption is more than five times higher than that of West Bank Palestinians (350 liters per person per day in Israel compared to 60 liters per person per day in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem). West Bank Palestinian water consumption is 40 liters less than the minimum global standards set by the World Health Organization (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2007). According to a 2005 report by the Palestinian Hydrology Group, an

estimated 30% of surveyed communities in the West Bank (190 communities) were not connected to a water network and relied primarily on tankered water and rainwater collected in household cisterns (Palestinian Hydrology Group, 2006). Loss of jobs, earnings, assets and incomes sharply reduced economic access to food with real per capita income decreasing by half since 1999 and resulting in six out of ten people falling below the \$2.10 USD per day poverty line in mid-2006 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

The impact of water shortages and agricultural land on food security levels were reflected by the 2006 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) study, which concluded that 34% (1,322,019) of the population of the WBGS is food secure, 20% (777,658) is marginally secure, 12% (466,595) is vulnerable to becoming food insecure and 34% (1,322,019) is food insecure. People most vulnerable to food insecurity are equally distributed between rural and urban areas (32% urban and 34% rural) (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2007); all segments of Palestinian society appear to be equally impacted.

The harsh economic and social conditions, coupled with lack of progress on the peace front, are a potentially explosive combination and are contributing towards the destruction of the social fabric. Accordingly, this required all of the grassroots NGOs working in rural development to focus on improving humanitarian conditions and reviving socio-economic life. This meant they had less opportunity to work on “big-picture” issues related to creating a lasting just peace with Israel.

The grassroots movement has traditionally played a fundamental role in communities’ involvement in socio-political issues in Palestinian society. Historically, Palestinian grassroots NGOs such as PARC and UAWC took the service provision role in the absence of a stable central authority. Today, the NGOs working in fields such as health, education, and agriculture

represent some of the largest and most efficient organizations; many surpass the PNA ministries in terms of budget, staffing and experience (Hanafi & Tabar, 2005).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in the functioning of Palestinian civil society. For decades, Palestinian NGOs have performed an essential role in delivering economic and social services to the poor and marginalized in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and in developing democratic institutions in Palestinian society. NGOs, along with the Palestinian Authority, are thus capable of serving as a main actor in the overall Palestinian development effort. However, the integrity and effectiveness of Palestinian NGOs is being challenged from a number of angles. Of particular interest is the role of the international donor community and the linkages to Palestinian political movements. This dissertation examines the extent to which delivery of services provided by grassroots NGOs can lead to progressive community change.

The donor community gradually changed over the years of the first Intifada (1987-1993), as European donors started to occupy the front lines by providing more funding to NGOs, eventually replacing the Arab regional funding. By the time the Declaration of Principles was signed in Washington on September 13, 1993, there were an estimated 200 international NGOs active (either physically or through funding mechanisms in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) (Challand, 2009).

Arguably, the act of funding is not a neutral endeavor. The historical and institutional changes both of local civil society and the increased presence of international donors generated great insight to the connection between political agenda and aid. Donors then have both direct and indirect influence over how NGOs perceive their linkages to Palestinian political movements.

Palestinian NGOs are rooted in related social movements: movements against occupation for social justice, and for community resilience. These NGOs that were providing services (in health, agriculture, education) were also serving political purposes (since political parties were forbidden under Israeli occupation). They portrayed themselves as popular movements resisting colonial ideology. NGOs later portrayed themselves as popular-based organizations with a strong legitimacy, resisting both Israeli occupation and the autocratic propensities of the emerging Palestinian National Authority (PNA). NGOs have played a vital role as social actors on the Palestinian scene but historically have also been subordinate to political parties. The political parties under the umbrella of PLO, were concentrating on organizing civil society politically in the form of mass movement and institutionalized NGOs. However, the interests of NGOs are persistently at tension with the interests of the international donor community, although these interests vary to some degree among the donors.

Palestinian civil society is then challenged from outside of the Palestinian national and community boundaries. Resources such as money through external funding are fundamental for Palestinian NGOs. It's assumed that the purpose of funding through projects and programs is to improve the conditions of existence of a population that is deprived in some way (socially, economically, or politically). However, organizations previously concerned with a broader vision for justice (such as freedom of historic Palestine, right of return and land rights) turned their attention to smaller issues such as social services and other arrangements necessary for statehood and constitutional development as part of the effort to acquire funding. Grassroots NGOs depend on foundations for their resources, not the people; thus, they spend little if any time organizing and are instead accountable to their funders rather than to their communities. Consequently these organizations are not invested in the question of social change and social justice; rather there

remains a steady uptick in programs that may link marginalized populations to material resources, vocational training, and stop-gap mechanisms. These forms of pseudo-empowerment are privileged at the expense of programs that *actually* empower (in terms of breaking dependency on the Israeli occupation) or in others words challenge the existing political and patriarchal social structure.

The Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation is, in a sense, a struggle for absolute liberation from oppression. While ending the Israeli occupation is critical, equally imperative is ending the oppression within Palestine itself. That means fostering a robust civil society sector that maintains its voluntary and participatory spirit. In the case of Palestinian grassroots organizations, I postulate that the more successful organizations, are the ones that can mobilize the most resources from local resources, tend to be decentralized, informally structured, and directed by a core of transformative leaders ideologically committed to the goals of the organization in the broader context that focuses on social change and justice. The nucleus of these empowered organizations is a focus on grassroots organizing to solve social problems and improve economic conditions in distressed communities. Organizations that are engaged in successful mobilization efforts branch out to balance community development or the provision of social services specifically toward a comprehensive community empowerment agenda.

Absent of the influential funders, Palestinian NGOs *could* be more effective not only in terms of building civil society but also in terms of challenging the patriarchal social structures. It was evident that the slow decay of Palestinian civil society appeared to intersect with the “donor problem hypothesis” addressed in this dissertation. Embedded within this concern of a failing Palestinian civil society was the concern that a power vacuum had formed in which fringe elements could possibly rise up.

In January 2006, the radical political Islamic movement, Hamas, came to power by a popular majority vote in the 2006 elections. This outcome surprised some political analysts (Hilal, 2003), who argued that Palestine is an occupied state that has historically supported more progressive and secular political leadership. Analysts such as Jad (2005) have documented the extent to which Islamic movements in Palestine have implemented community based service delivery programs to gain support for their ideological movement. At the same time, secular leftist grassroots organizations, such as Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees (PARC), have had a long history of working with an explicit mission to develop rural communities, provide services and build political support. Despite that fact, more than 25 years of PARC's grassroots services to community based organizations (CBOs) such as women's clubs and farmers' associations, the people of Palestine chose to elect Hamas rather than more secular parties.

To understand why this outcome came about, this dissertation will examine the extent to which delivery of services provided by grassroots NGOs can lead to progressive community change by conducting a case study of Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees (PARC) and Union of Agriculture Working Committees (UAWC). Palestinian NGOs are tasked to promote lasting change. The grassroots NGOs that have actively played an essential role in the agriculture, health, and education sector and rural development were originally linked to leftist factions in order to build a successful model of mobilization through popular community-based committees. Many authors point to these organizations as the backbone of contemporary Palestinian civil society (Muslih, 1993). It is therefore important to understand Palestinian grassroots NGOs that have been working in the agricultural sector for over 20 years in the WBGS. Their central objective is to enhance the economic and social conditions of Palestinians in rural communities within the evolving socio-political context. The crucial question in this

regard is: do the social services provided by NGOs actually challenge existing social structures and promote progressive social change?

This dissertation explores the extent to which delivery of services provided by grassroots NGOs can lead to progressive community change by addressing the following questions. Under what conditions does delivery of services lead to progressive community change? How does organizational structure influence progressive community change? The proposed research will add to debates over the role of NGOs by examining the dilemmas of cooptation facing an organization in pursuing goals of progressive community change by asking some questions such as: What are the processes by which community change is co-opted (by donors, regional organizations, community culture) and how does that impact progressive community change? Because the organizations highlight the importance of promoting gender equity, the study also asks: How do these processes play out in looking at community-based gender development programs in Palestine?

### *The Thesis Outline*

This thesis is based on a case study of two well established Palestinian non-governmental organizations that were founded as voluntary grassroots organizations early eighty by two main political factions. It consists of two main parts. The first part (Chapters 1-3) will discuss the analysis of the historical evolution of local NGOs in the Palestinian context with main focus on grassroots organizations that have been established by political parties and the changes that took place in these organizations in terms of being non-ideological, professional and service provider organizations. It will also discuss the theoretical framework that can inform and situate these organizations linked to their role in social services provision and the impact of these

organizations on community progressive change in light of the existing political structure at the local community level.

The second part (Chapters 4-6) of the study consists of four empirical chapters analyzing the implications of donor driven projects on the main factors in these organizations and their performance. It will explore the engagement of donor agencies with NGOs, and how this relationship impacts community development. It also analyzes the ability of these organizations to promote progressive community change at the local level. The role of practitioners and their capacities are essential in this regard; the study explores their visions and policy implementation at the local level. Chapters 4-6 will analyze strategies, policies, and visions used by Palestinian grassroots NGOs to address and endorse progressive community change. Chapter 7 introduces general conclusions. A more detailed summary of Chapters 4-6 follows.

#### *Chapter Four*

The central purpose of this chapter is to critically explore the engagement of donor agencies with NGOs, and how this relationship impacts community development. In doing so, this chapter highlights how the interaction between donors and NGOs is not only centered on a Western model of civil society, but also evolves around those Western institutional mechanisms and disciplinary discourses. As a result it affects the ability of local NGOs, to understand these changes, including the role and future of NGOs in the light of donors- NGOs relationship, we have to understand how the relationship between NGOs and international networks of donors influence and alter how NGOs function.

This chapter argues that NGOs in Palestine cannot be understood without a close examination of the systemic changes that have taken place within these NGOs, in light of their perceived operation as professionalized grassroots institutions that are non-partisan, non-



ideological, non-profit, and most critically non-political. The depoliticization of NGOs in Palestine has fundamentally altered the capacity of Palestinian civil society to challenge oppressive social systems, and in turn empower individual Palestinians to work collectively. It will also examine grassroots NGOs willingness and capacity to address gender equality and social justice in grassroots NGOs and their development practices.

### *Chapter Five*

This section analyzes the practitioners work with CBO pursuing the community progressive change? What guides them in their practices with local communities? And how do they define the social change and community leadership as an impact of their projects? It explores how practitioners conceptualize the progressive community change at community level through different activities and projects and in what capacity do practitioners conduct their community work? The final section of this chapter further explains the NGOs analysis, interpretation and understanding of social change process, particularly on a micro level – community level. This section examines social change at three distinct levels; the organizational level through policies, vision, mission and strategies; practitioners' self-definition of social change through their community practices; and at community level, where community members have certainly entertained ideas, notions, and images about social change.

### *Chapter Six*

Amongst all the other conceptualizations, this chapter examines grassroots NGOs willingness and capacity as organizations to address gender equality and social justice in grassroots NGOs and their development practices. Questions are raised about how women are empowered through their grassroots collective practices? How do grassroots organizations' interventions through programs and projects affect gender power relations at community level?

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Introduction*

This chapter discusses four areas of the literature that is most influential to understanding Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Palestinian context: NGOs and civil society, resource mobilization theory in social movements, political opportunity structure, and community development theory. This study draws on this literature in constructing the acquiescences' framework that is used in the remaining chapters.

### *Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society*

NGOs position themselves within their society, not only in relation to the ever-changing local political and social circumstances, but also as they contest or ascribe to changing global agendas and international standards (Hanafi & Tabar, 2005). Politically, NGOs are regarded as essential components in civil society that are capable of promoting democratic relations, in addition to enhancing accountable forms of government and new debates on citizenship. Through an economic spectrum, NGOs are viewed as effective and cost-efficient vehicles for delivering social services as well as the preferred channel for services as a deliberate substitute for the state (Hulme & Edwards, 1997). However, the literature warns of the dangers that an increased role in providing social services poses for NGOs. The argument has been presented that a weak state with limited financial resources and poor administrative capacity will seek to derive benefits from the role of NGOs as service providers, while trying to exclude them from gaining influence in other spheres, especially the political realm (Bratton, 1989).

In the absence of sound democratic fundamentals in a given society, NGOs may view it as being in their own interest to retain their own separate institutional sphere a strong role in service provision, even at the expense of their ideological views (Hanafi & Tabar, 2005). Smillie

(1995) argues that the biggest risk for NGOs today is that they will lose their ideology or their advocacy role and become entrepreneurs in a quasi-market environment in which they contract themselves out to governments and are therefore more like businesses than voluntary organizations. Therefore, this research will also explore how the ideologies of grassroots NGOs' (i.e., core norms, values, principles, and beliefs) mediate their response to certain political and cultural conditions and shape their framing decisions through collective actions at the local community level.

As Wood (1997) explains, "Fragmentation of the delivery function entails a corresponding fragmentation of voice, with political parties and unions sidelined in the process, their perspective voices denied primacy and legitimacy in the specific sectoral context of service provision" (p.84). He illustrates that given the role and expertise of NGOs in sectors like health, agriculture, or education, they are able to articulate and advance policy positions with legitimacy unmatched by political-parties and are in better positions to affect public policy. When these highly knowledgeable organizations are removed from the political process, the culture loses critical sources of information that are fundamental to social progress.

The political dimension of a new development paradigm regards NGOs as agents of social change. NGOs are considered to be social organizations, capable of contributing to a vibrant civil society (Hanafi & Tabar, 2005). Pearce (1997) reaches a similar conclusion. Pearce argues that NGOs in Latin America have three models available to them with which to advance change: pluralism, grassrootism, and empowerment. According to Pearce, pluralism is associated with donor discourse on civil society and governance: it envisions NGOs playing an intermediary role between the state and social groups. Grassrootism refers to grassroots activism. Lastly, empowerment refers to social transformation via popular organization and mobilization.

While Pearce finds the last two to be more effective ways to advance social change, she points out that there has been a tendency to lean towards the first model. This study will therefore explore factors that shape grassroots NGOs orientation to influence the local level to meet ideological and political ends.

Grassroots NGOs, such as PARC and UAWC, emerged in the Palestinian territories in an attempt to mobilize a community whose sustainable development opportunities had been destroyed by the occupation; organizations arose whose main goal was to incite development amongst an entire community. Grassroots NGOs' projects and extension services usually focus on strengthening farmers' abilities to sustain food security and impeding Israeli land confiscation policies through improving agricultural practices and encouraging the use of sustainable agricultural techniques, creating and introducing alternative water and energy resources, and creating agricultural and related job opportunities. In realizing that women in rural areas are marginalized and that the resources available to their development are limited, grassroots NGOs have been focusing efforts on facilitating the development of skills of rural women and improving their productive capacity, while building leadership skills and social organization abilities. These grassroots NGOs also take an active role in organizing volunteer campaigns, forging relationships with local civil society organizations and being strong advocates of democracy and civil society.

While continuing to pursue priorities and long-term objectives, grassroots NGOs have been responding to the changing needs of their beneficiaries due to changing political and socio-economic conditions. This research project examines the extent to which delivery of services provided by grassroots NGOs can lead to progressive community change. Under what conditions does delivery of services lead to progressive community change? How does organizational

structure influence progressive community change? The proposed research adds to debates over the role of NGOs by examining the dilemmas of cooptation facing an organization in pursuing goals of progressive community change. This project further examines the processes by which community change is co-opted (by donors, regional organizations, community culture) and the impact of this on progressive community change. How do these processes play out in looking at community-based gender development programs in Palestine?

NGOs are critical components of a robust Palestinian civil society. Civil society represents the broad array of societal actors who influence an amalgamation of communities, interest groups, and political actors, all collaborating, competing or merely existing side by side, steering the direction of the Palestinian peoples. NGOs –and other similar institutions- actively attempt to influence civil society through various political and social movements, harnessing critical resources and taking advantage of political opportunities as they arise. This intentionality, when carried out at the local level, is considered community development.

In addition to the literature on NGOs, three sociologically-rooted theoretical perspectives provide the framework for the study: resource mobilization theory in social movements, political opportunity structure, and community development theory. Variables, which contribute to the study of grassroots NGOs in Palestine, are identified in both a resource mobilization theory and political opportunities approach. These are: underlying conditions of discontent; availability and growth of resources; ideology, organization, and strategies of the grassroots NGOs; changes in the political opportunity structure; the type of political system; and the dynamics of state repression.

### *Resource Mobilization*

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) departed from the traditional social movement approach, according to which social movements are explained by the existence of grievances in society. Resource mobilization theorists argued that grievances are ubiquitous in every society (Buechler, 1993) and that as a consequence, grievances alone cannot be sufficient conditions for the rise of social movements. The availability of resources, including organization and opportunities for collective actions, were considered more important than grievances or state or social breakdowns (Klandermans, 1997) in triggering social movement formation (Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald 1987).

Resource mobilization theorists argued that grievances are relatively constant, deriving from structural conflicts of interests built into social institutions, and that movements form because of long-term changes in group resources, organizations, and opportunities for collective action (Jenkins, 1983). The resource mobilization approach emphasizes both the societal aspects and constraints of social movement. It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Thus mobilization is the process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action. The major factors, therefore, are the resources controlled by the group prior to mobilization efforts, the processes by which the group pools resources and directs these towards social change, and the extent to which outsiders increase the pool of resources (Jenkins, 1983).

Since individual participation in social movements is explained mainly by a cost/benefit analysis of resources, cultural issues, such as grievances and mechanisms for social cohesion of

groups, are not the deciding factors for determining when social movements will arise. In fact, grievances and discontent may be created and manipulated by entrepreneurs trying to form Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) for personal resource gain (McCarthy & Zald, 1987). These social movements arise when an elite class has the resources available to mobilize a group. People do not become involved in these groups because they have a cause; they become involved to benefit personally. The purpose of these groups is to aggregate resources for themselves (McCarthy & Zald, 1987). RMT presumes that such aggregation of resources requires some organization, so it focuses on understanding the SMOs that are formed.

According to RMT, organization is an important resource for a social movement, in decreasing the cost of participation (Morris, 1984), in the recruitment of participants (Oberschall, 1973), and in increasing the chances of success (Gamson, 1975). Resource Mobilization theorists have identified preexisting forms of organizations as critical in facilitating mobilization and favor formal organizations, which can act effectively and whose goals match the preference of the movement. The favoring of formal organizations ignored the informally organized networks of movement activists that probably played a larger role than SMOs in mobilizing people and pursuing movement goals. In the case of PARC, preexisting coalitions and ties to political parties (such as the Palestinian People Party and international movements as a whole) coalesced, not necessarily determined by a grievance group. In fact, pre-existing political structures helped to form PARC out of a perceived need.

RMT came to contradict the traditional approach in studying social movements that included any set of non-institutionalized collective actions consciously oriented towards social change (or resisting such changes) and possessing a minimum of organization (Jenkins, 1983). Resource mobilization theorists have, in contrast, seen social movements as extensions of

institutionalized actions and have restricted their focus on movements of institutional change that attempt to alter “elements of social structure and/or the reward distribution of society,” organize previously unorganized groups against institutional elites, or represent the interests of groups excluded from the polity (Jenkins, 1983, p. 529). The success or failure of SMOs is determined by external factors affecting resource flow to and from the organization (McCarthy & Zald, 1987). Each SMO is part of a social movement industry and produces a product, just like any other industry (McCarthy & Zald, 1987). This product is the purported target goal of the SMO. Therefore, the first priority of an SMO is self-preservation. The purpose of an SMO is not to clash with authorities in an effort to create social change but to maintain or increase membership and resource flow (McCarthy & Zald, 1987); this orientation does not help to challenge the status quo. In contrast to the resource mobilization orientation, the New Social Movement (NSM) approach seeks an explanation for the rise of social movements of the past two decades with the appearance of new grievances and aspirations. It stresses that new movements differ from old movements in values, action forms, and constituency. New social movements do not accept the premises of a society based on economic growth. New social movements make extensive use of unconventional forms of action. Two populations are particularly predisposed to participate in new social movements: the first group includes people who have been marginalized by societal developments; while the second group consists of those who have become particularly sensitive to problems resulting from modernization, that stem from more general shifts in values and needs (Klandermans, 1997).

The NSM approach focuses on the ability of movement actors to mobilize and allocate resources through constraints, but also acknowledges opportunities created in the process of achieving specific goals (Mueller, 1992). It is a strategic approach to social movement research,



and Mueller argues it is often criticized for taking grievances for granted in this theory. The resource mobilization approach has been most fruitful in analyzing mobilization processes and emphasizing the role of existing organizations and networks in laying the groundwork for social movement formation (Oberschall, 1973). This component of resource mobilization depends heavily on Olson's (1965) logic of collective action and particularly on his distinction between collective and selective incentives that differ in the way they are related. The core argument of Olson's theory is that rational individuals will not participate in collective action unless selective incentives encourage them to do so. This explanation is consistent with the initial assumption that grievances are not sufficient for the rise of social movements.

The resource mobilization approach would help in analyzing mobilization processes and in emphasizing the role of existing organizations and networks in laying the ground work for social movement formation. Additionally, in making central the question of organizational forms, the resource mobilization approach enables more thoughtful attention to efficiency and effectiveness of Palestinian grassroots NGOs, such as PARC and UAWC.

Social movements have therefore shifted from classical SMOs towards professional SMOs. The former includes indigenous leadership, volunteer staff, extensive membership, resources from direct beneficiaries, and actions based on mass participation. The latter includes outside leadership, full time paid staff, small or nonexistent membership, resources from conscience constituencies and actions that "speak for" rather than involve an aggrieved group (Jenkins, 1983). This would be applicable and helpful in analyzing the case of Palestinian grassroots NGOs since they underwent these transformational changes from voluntary grassroots organizations to more professionally-oriented organizations.

However, there are a few problems with RMT when it is applied to certain social movements. One problem is that RMT focuses almost solely on SMOs. Many NSM approaches do not have any traditional organizations. Instead they have what could be better called a social movement community (Buechler, 1993). The social movement is decentralized and cannot be fit into the SMO framework provided by RMT. It is very clear in the case of PARC and UAWC that preexisting popular committees and social ties that were established by their affiliated political parties are the core factors in their emergence in the 1980s. Accordingly, this study will navigate RMT assumptions in valuing these preexistent structures.

Critiques of resource mobilization are as common as positive treatments by proponents. They can be loosely categorized as originating from three directions: 1) from within the school but calling for elaboration of areas that have been overlooked; 2) from New Social Movement theorists (more on this school of thought later) who see resource mobilization as fundamentally unable to explain movements of today; and 3) from activists and politically-oriented academics who find fatal flaws and omissions in both RMT and NSM.

RMT also discounts the necessity of the formation of a collective identity. For an SMO to form and be effective, individuals within it need to form some sort of collective identity so that they can act with some degree of social cohesion (Buechler, 1993). This collective identity is not always formed; therefore, it is necessary to look at collective identity formation to determine when SMOs will arise. The collective identity of an SMO also affects the methods that it will use, so it is necessary to look at the collective identity of an SMO to understand its actions (Buechler, 1993). It is important to understand Palestinian grassroots NGOs orientations and action such as PARC and UAWC in this regard. In NSMs, the collective identity formed often dictates specifically what sorts of actions can be taken.

The resource mobilization framework downplayed grievances; it has also marginalized ideology (Buechler, 1990). This marginalization typically occurs by equating ideology with the expression of grievances, and then dismissing both as constant background factors with little explanation. Palestinian grassroots NGOs' mission such as PARC's and UAWC's is rooted in the Palestinian identity -- an identity based upon the struggle against state occupation, an occupation which seeks to limit capacity and control the resources available to Palestinians as a whole to benefit the occupiers. An organization provides a service or a project; it should coincide with its mission to build sovereign Palestinian communities, which by its very nature should be parallel to the movement identity. This will build the organization's capacity to think beyond each individual project and tie projects to the movement or the macro level structure. Ideological beliefs typically provide a critical diagnosis of the larger society, an idealized sketch of a positive alternative, and some suggestion as to how the problematic present may be replaced with a preferable future (Buechler, 1990).

In the broadest sense, ideology encompasses the ideas, beliefs, values, symbols and meanings that motivate individual participation and give coherence to collective action. Ideology often performs multiple functions, including transforming vague dissatisfactions into a politicized agenda, providing a sense of collective identity and defining certain goods as potential movement resources. Thus, in the case of Palestinian grassroots NGOs such as PARC and UAWC, if their projects do not contribute to the movement, then they are ineffective in their mission: they, in a sense, create community dependency as opposed to creating community empowerment. This empowerment would come from breaking the chains of dependency on international funding organizations, Israel, and ideally even the NGOs themselves in the long run. Accordingly, RMT will not be able to analyze how PARC and UAWC, through their

projects at local community level, will establish steps toward the goals of the movements and give local communities the tools to pool their resources and maintain their public goods as an alternative to the community dependency on external funding.

RMT has been posed in terms of collective actors struggling for power in an institutional context. Micro-level processes have been ignored or treated as simplifying assumptions for a larger-scale analysis. The resource mobilization framework has tended to operate on the meso-level of analysis to the relative exclusion of both macro-level and micro-level explorations of collective action (Buechler, 1993). The larger questions of social structure and historical change and smaller issues of individual motivation and social interaction receive scant attention. Resource Mobilization framework is quite helpful in understanding the inter-organizational dynamics of movements, but it is less helpful in explaining their socio-historical determinants or the variable ability of such movements to recruit a committed members.

New Social Movement theory (NSM), developed independently in Europe, is a fundamentally different approach to the study of social movements. Klandermans (1997) contrasted RMT by saying that the former focuses on costs and benefits of participation, organization, and expectations of success. Klandermans (1997) said NSM, on the other hand, focuses on values, action forms, constituency, new aspirations, and satisfaction of the needs which are endangered. Cloward and Piven (1991) critiqued RMT on a different basis. They pointed out the tendency to aggregate normative and non-normative collective action, inconsistencies (e.g. saying that people sometimes protest because they are integrated into the social order and sometimes they protest because they are not), and other flaws in scholarship. They concluded, “in general, then organizational capacity doesn’t predict anything.”(p.445)

The Palestinian grassroots NGOs case demonstrates weaknesses in RMT. A social movement does not operate in a vacuum but is influenced by a number of actors, hierarchically. A movement in Palestine may have a promising message, but if it cannot connect to its desired demographic, such as farmers or laborers, it will invariably fail (micro). Additionally, actors outside of the movement, such as the Israeli government, may hamper or destroy the movement with extreme force or simple regulations (macro).

Understanding the meso-level of an organization is critical, but so are the macro and micro-levels; they all operate in a systemic manner. So it is very important to understand the existing power structure so as to help people within local communities build their power and develop the community leadership to take a greater role and provide a 'louder' voice in the everyday public activity of the daily life of the community.

### *Political Opportunity Structure*

The Political Opportunity Structure (POS) refers to the structural and contextual factors that encourage or inhibit social movement mobilization, as social movement scholars have examined how political opportunities affect both the emergence and the outcomes of social movements. While POS is a concept that was originally developed to understand the mobilization and outcomes of social movements in national contexts, it has recently been modified and adapted to study international phenomena. (Shawki, 2007)

Eisinger (1973) proposed the political opportunity structure theory in his analysis of race riots in American cities during the 1960s. A key component of that conceptualization was to distinguish between opening and closing political structures. Eisinger argued that governments that are responsive to their citizens' needs and demands are indicative of open opportunity structures, and by contrast, closed structures are found in situations where power is concentrated

and governments do not respond. He found that cities with mixed open and closed access to the dominant polity experienced increased protest, whereas those with more open institutions incorporated aggrieved citizens into mainstream politics.

This developed later into the political process model of Tilly (1978), which also examined choices available to activists seeking to optimize their claims in a given context. Tilly also explored how contentious actors weigh the costs and benefits of mobilization, considering facilitation and repression by governments and power holders as well as opportunities to mobilize and threats of repression. As a result, he adds agency and instrumentality to the equation. Tilly found that polities which provide political actors viable access decrease contention. However, he also concluded that those which are overly repressive prevent contention. He thus identified a fine balance needed for mobilization, where the polity is open enough not to repress, but is closed enough to incorporate the discontent. Key to both Eisinger and Tilly's conceptualizations is attention to changing political contexts. Their conclusions are supported by Della Porta (1995), who studied model mobilization in Italy and found that radicalization of tactics was associated with closing opportunities.

Tarrow (1998) defines political opportunity as “consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent—dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success or failure” (p.19). This study defines the political opportunity structure in only one dimension. Meyer and Marullo (1992) and Gamson and Meyer (1996) propose a dimension of stability that is composed of the political opportunity structure. The study distinguishes static and dynamic political opportunity structure by this dimension. The static political opportunity structure is an institutional structure of politics. This study refers to this structure as the institutional opportunity structure. For example, the study encompasses the

electoral system and assembly institution. Conversely, the dynamic political opportunity structure is a structure produced with the character of polity. This study refers to this structure as the volatile opportunity structure. Concretely, volatile opportunity structure is a concentrated level of the power of polity (the head, Prime Minister or president, and political parties) and the relationship between the polity and the movement (hostility–friendship).

In the POS theory, the assumption is that these structures influence the occurrence of social movements. Moreover, the structures are characterized by the degree of openness and closeness of a political system to the social and political goals and tactics of social movements. Several discussions regard the relationship between openness and closeness of political opportunity structure and the occurrence of social movements, and the influence of political opportunity structure. Gamson and Meyer (1996) note that opportunity has a strong cultural component and by limiting our attention to variance in political institutions and the relationship among political actors, we miss something important, which McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) have expanded upon by identifying four general types of “expanding cultural opportunities” (p. 25) that appear to increase the likelihood of movement activities. These four types are the dramatization of a glaring contradiction between the highly salient cultural value and conventional social practices, suddenly imposed grievances, dramatizations of system vulnerability or illegitimacy, and the availability of an innovative framing within subsequent challengers that can map their own grievances and demands (McAdam, 1996).

Articles by Meyer (2004) and Meyer and Minkoff (2004) also offer suggestions on how to refine political opportunity literature and derive more consistent mechanisms of analysis by assessing a wide spectrum of the concept's usage and propose new means to develop, test and operationalize it. They find that the main problems with political opportunity stem from

clumping together different definitions, measures, outcomes and social actors. They argue that the route to making political opportunity a viable tool for social movement research is by recognizing underlying patterns among usages and measures. To do this, Meyer and Minkoff (2004) suggest regrouping political opportunities along Eisinger and Tilly's initial conceptualizations. They recognize differences among *structural opportunities*, such as "formal changes in rules and policies affecting political access" and distinguish those from *signaling opportunities* that activists and officials monitor as changes in the political environment. These changes encourage mobilization or policy reforms and both are treated as movement or issue specific. Consequently, *general opportunities* are both substantive and symbolic in importance, or affect institutional structures and perceptions of political context and are not necessarily movement or issue specific. Meyer and Minkoff hypothesize those differences in reported results stem from conflating each of these and treating them as the same.

Ramos (2008) did not analyze the ability to influence, but rather compared outcomes to mobilize the contentious action of different social movement actors as well as the founding of different types of organizations. This extends Meyer's and Minkoff's (2004) work by disaggregating each aspect. In doing so, his analysis used their framework of political opportunities, which differentiates among structural, signaling, and general opportunities. It also added measures of critical events and accounted for time and change in various model specifications.

Overall, the paper illustrates that there are several main questions social movements' researchers need to engage. These questions are: which opportunities perform most consistently across a broad range of movement actors and organizations? Which perform most consistently across methodological specifications? Addressing these questions will highlight core findings



that transcend differences in movements and across the spectrum of consistent champions and strategic respondents. As McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) note, social movement research will advance only with the identification of underlying mechanisms that work consistently over a wide range of cases. Analysis of Canadian Aboriginal mobilization illustrates that when identifying differences, common patterns indeed emerge and consistent influences of mobilization become apparent (Ramos, 2008).

What is missed in this conceptualization is the critical role of international trends and events in shaping domestic institutions and alignments. Social movements undervalued the impact of global political and economic processes in structuring the domestic possibilities for successful collective action. In the case of Palestinian NGOs that are heavily influenced through politically motivated funding, the POS will not be able to analyze the political opportunities that might enhance these organizations or be inhibited by the donors. While social movement literature has fully explored claims and counter-claims regarding the relationship between protest and state repression, it would be helpful in analyzing the grassroots NGO's tactics facing harsh Israeli state repression, represented by land confiscation and natural resource control as exhibited in the case of the Apartheid Wall. Khawaja (1993) found positive relationships between most forms of state repression (including harsh forms such as dispersion by force and shooting) and collective action in his analysis of the West Bank between 1976 and 1985. Instead of deterring protest, Khawaja concludes, repression increased subsequent collective action and reinforced popular resistance.

#### *Elements of Social Movements*

According to the resource mobilization approach, the availability of resources makes a significant difference. Resources include money, time, technical infrastructure, expertise, and so

on, including the structures and organizations to mobilize and deploy these resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1973). According to McCarthy and Zald (2003), the resource mobilization approach “examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkage of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements” (p.169). Resource mobilization theory emphasizes the wherewithal for starting, sustaining, and expanding social movement organizations. The resources that are needed range from manpower to money, from words of endorsement or encouragement to influential persons.

Resources such as money through external funding are fundamental for Palestinian grassroots NGOs. It is assumed that the purpose of funding through projects and programs is to improve the conditions of existence of a population that is deprived in some way (socially, economically, or politically). However, and according to funding influence, organizations previously concerned with a broader vision for justice (such as freedom of historic Palestine, right of return and land rights) turned their attention to smaller issues such as social services and other arrangements necessary for statehood and constitutional development. Grassroots NGOs depend on foundations for their resources, not the people; thus, they spend little if any time organizing and are instead accountable to their funders rather than to their communities. Therefore these organizations are not invested in the question of social change and social justice. As funding agencies typically existed in capitalist structures, they were able to manipulate these NGOs to use their resources to create a class of people who live comfortably on donors’ dollars. This is what Hanafi and Tabar (2005) called “a globalized elite” (p.187). This class of people becomes less angry and is less compelled to transform the system. Therefore, the developmental context in which they worked was often more globally than locally oriented. As a result, their

intellectual and political orientation became less rooted in the continuing local context of political struggle against Israeli colonial occupation. Many of these elites became part of the agenda of international agencies by concentrating on issues and projects that were not politically connected to the reality of the majority of Palestinians. This dis-embedding, according to Hanafi and Tabar (2005), created a fracture within Palestinian society. This fracture can only be mended if the NGO community returns to its origins, the Palestinian grassroots community, and the core issue: the continuation of the Israeli colonial project and the political, economic, and social disenfranchisement of the Palestinian people not only by Israel, but by the US/EU neo-liberal agenda as well.

It is important to say that while NGOs get pressure from donors such as USAID and the Ford Foundation to shape their political agenda, the NGOs also resist signing politically-charged anti-terrorism statements and in some instances refuse funding offers altogether. Thus the more funds certain organizations get, the more likely they will be shifting their policies from a social change framework to functioning as professional service providers. This in turn creates communities committed to service projects rather than to the NGO's political vision and goals. Consequently, this will negatively impact local community actions related to political or community empowerment.

In the Palestinian grassroots case, this study postulates that the more successful organizations - the ones that can mobilize the most resources from local resources - tend to be decentralized, informally structured, and directed by a core of transformative leaders ideologically committed to the goals of the organization in the broader context that focuses on social change and justice. The nucleus of these empowered organizations is a focus on grassroots organizing to solve social problems and improve economic conditions in distressed communities.

Organizations that are engaged in successful mobilization efforts branch out to balance community development or the provision of social services purposely toward a comprehensive community empowerment agenda.

With regard to strategy and tactics, it is absolutely essential for the success of grassroots NGOs that they obtain the support of third parties and secure allies from the elites. The higher the level of disruption these grassroots NGOs have (such as the activation of third parties, generating sympathy in bystander publics, and the winning of allies from among highly committed elites to the vision of the grassroots organization) the higher the potential to have successful community actions. Although many grassroots organizations engage in some aspects of community organizing, the public is not well informed about that. The mainstream media typically reports the activities of these organizations only when they disrupt and challenge the existing power structures, though few media outlets routinely cover these efforts nonetheless. Media can serve as another venue to mobilize and cultivate the residents of a community to become activists. Media can focus on successful local community based organizations (CBOs') initiatives in order to promote more efforts in community development.

Since there are many leaders in Palestinian communities who can provide first hand evidence of the importance of grassroots NGOs in changing both materialistic and socio-economic conditions of marginalized people in the communities, the strategies of organizations' incentives and motivations are fundamental in demonstrating support for these efforts. Grassroots NGOs should start community award programs to honor the leaders and CBO's working on the front lines to empower low-income people in their communities. This will sustain these efforts in order to maximize community support.

Political Opportunity is another vital facet reflecting the effectiveness of social movements. Tarrow (1994) asserts that people engage in movements and movements tend to succeed when political opportunity opens up. Groups with only minor grievances and significant resources may appear, while those with profound grievances and significant resources, who lack political opportunities, do not (Tarrow, 1994). “Political opportunities are elements of the political environment that affect perceptions as to the likelihood that collective action will succeed or fail” (Staggenborg, 2005, p. 754).

According to McAdam (1996), political opportunity includes the degree the institutionalized political system is open or closed, the stability or instability of elite alignment that tends to undergird a political system, the presence or absence of allies who hold positions of power, and the state’s inclination for repression. Although many have argued that the focus on political opportunities is one of the greatest determinants of the success of social action, others have argued that such attention to political structures negates the agency of a social movement.

Therefore many variables are considered important and fundamental in analyzing the Palestinian grassroots NGOs’ case. Grassroots NGOs’ success is partly a function of the political environment and changes in that environment (i.e., of the structure of political opportunities). Regimes such as the Palestinian National Authority, which are neither fully open nor entirely closed, or which are in the process of opening up thus exhibiting both open and closed characteristics, are the most likely to be rocked by protests. An exogenous change in the political order, at the domestic or international level, is conducive to mobilization; the election of a left-of-center or secular government perceived to be sympathetic to the goals of a grassroots NGO is a stimulant to civil protests, actions and other acts of resource mobilization.

The structure of political opportunities also plays a role in the success or failure of grassroots NGOs' activism and in the acceleration or deceleration of radical mobilization. The weakening of an autocratic regime presents opportunities to leftist, secular (and indeed other) revolutionaries. Third-world autocracies (in which elections are rigged and the legislature is a rubber stamp) do not attempt to control all aspects of the economy and society and are subject to radical actions and mobilizations the more Western ideas of democracy and freedom have penetrated the local culture through trade, travel, and students returning from years of study in the West.

While the spark that touches off a cycle is often unpredictable in origin and timing, something is known about how the action of the regime (which is under attack) contributes to the multiplication and escalation of protests. Ironically, the responsiveness of the regime to protests and demonstrations and its unwillingness or inability to suppress them tends to encourage them. Analyzing the grassroots NGOs' tactics in facing harsh Israeli state repression, represented by land confiscation and natural resource control as exhibited in the case of the Apartheid Wall and most forms of state repression (including harsh forms such as dispersion by force and shooting) indicates a positive relationship between state repression and collective action. State repression increased subsequent collective action and reinforced popular resistance.

#### *Community Development Approaches*

There are three major approaches to community development that have been laid out by Christenson and Robinson (1989): self-help, the technical assistance model, and the conflict model. Flora and Flora (2008) added the appreciative inquiry approach as an additional model. Each approach identifies different potential roles for the change agent as well as a different orientation to function, conception of change, problems to be addressed, and action goals.

The self-help approach was being widely employed in many Third World countries (Christenson & Robinson, 1989). Self-help is based on the premise that people have basic rights and will be well served if they exercise that right to collaborate in setting common goals, in organizing themselves, and in mobilizing the resources necessary to achieve those goals (Christenson & Robinson, 1989; Summers 1986; Wilkinson 1986). The central assumption in the self-help model of community development is that communities are homogeneous and based on consensus. Thus, development efforts, which depend on existing local leaders as a basis for community organizing, may systematically bias development efforts away from the problems of the least-advantaged citizens (Flora & Flora, 2008) and that bias, in turn, can give rise to increased inequalities, poverty and marginalization. Therefore participation and democratic decision-making are essential to the self-help model of community development. Finally the self-help model of development assumes a significant degree of community autonomy. Yet in the case of Palestine, communities are highly involved in regional, national and international networks that have enormous impacts on them in creating the dependency that challenges this assumption.

The technical assistance approach (defined as the provision of programs, activities and services to strengthen the capacity of recipients to improve their performance with respect to an inherent or assigned function (Gamm & Fisher, 1989) is intended to help communities identify their problems, needs, and potential solutions which often come from outside (Flora & Flora, 2008) and may allow for some degree of community “autonomy” (p. 359) or ownership. The technical assistance approach is based on provision of that which is not available in the community and repair of what is not working. This approach requires local residents to participate in decisions to assimilate and absorb information concerning complex legal and

scientific issues (Flora & Flora, 2008). By doing so, motivation to participate will be greatly decreased. Therefore, as a result, this model will indirectly contribute to the exclusion of active community members from decision-making centers. Technical assistance also is goal-oriented, so cost-benefit analysis, as a technical tool, is used to determine and evaluate the projects. Accordingly, local citizens are defined as consumers of development, not participants. Flora and Flora (2008) pointed out that the technical assistance approach can only measure financial capital and does not consider human and social capital. As a result, this approach often works to the advantage of the existing power structure. Community development means organizing excluded people to analyze their own problems and the situation of oppression to solve their problems. For example, women are often excluded from water resource management committees at the local community level, even though women are the main actors who understand the importance of water management on primary users. While most community development work may be viewed as planned community change, it often involves or leads to conflict (some professionals advocate the use of conflict as purposeful social intervention) (Alinsky, 1971). The conflict approach was codified by Saul Alinsky, who began as a community organizer in 1930s in a Polish neighborhood in Chicago. Alinsky (1971, p. 12) states that the world and hence any community is “an arena of power politics moved primarily by perceived immediate self-interests.” Whereas the technical assistance approach views the existing power structure as having the interests of the community at heart, the conflict approach is deeply suspicious of those who have formal community power. The conflict approach assumes that power is never given away; it always has to be taken: “Change means movement. Movement means friction and friction causes heat” (Alinsky, 1971, p. 21). Thus the goal of the conflict approach is to build a people’s organization, which must be democratic and participatory, and allow those without power to gain it through



direct action. The basic premise of the conflict approach is based on the unequal distribution of benefits in society, with one group seeking to maximize its own potential (Christenson & Robinson, 1989). Therefore the overall ends of community organizing should be such things as equality, justice, and freedom.

In terms of planned change, all three approaches to community development aim to achieve different ways of thought to be introduced (Crowfoot & Chesler, 1974) discuss the counter-cultural (self-help) perspective, the professional-technical (technical assistance) perspective, and the political (conflict) perspective. The appreciative inquiry approach on the other hand contains many elements of the self-help approach but instead focuses on community strengths rather than community needs, so it engages community partners in conversations to learn about the factors that contribute to success. Consequently, by identifying assets, at times using the Community Capitals Framework, it attempts to build transformative change by taking into the future what works best in the present and what has worked for community well-being in the past (Flora & Flora, 2008).

#### *Elements of Community Development Frameworks*

Jasper and Polletta (2001) identified the distinctions between reform/moderate social movement organizations and revolutionary movements that seek to transform the system itself. These movements tend to focus on fundamental political and economic change, as well as social change. Pyles (2009) considers both revolutionary and reform movements as relevant to the work of progressive community organizing. In the case of Palestinian grassroots NGOs, changing policies, improving programs, and enhancing economic access for disenfranchised (powerless) communities represent reform work and indeed are important parts of progressive social change. Therefore it's important and useful to think about the revolutionary work of transforming

political and social structures with some organizations containing elements of both dimensions. Progressive movements, or left-wing movements, are described as forward thinking and often seek to improve the situation of marginalized groups (Pyles, 2009). In order to build progressive grassroots actions in Palestine, grassroots movements should challenge the Israeli dehumanization and demonization of Palestinians that contribute to the bombing of their homes, places of worship, schools, universities, factories, and police stations (in short everything that sustains civilized and orderly life), changing the traditional negative values that reinforce the patriarchal system and the institutional barriers that people face to achieve sustainable communities.

Development efforts, which depend on existing local leaders as a basis for community organizing, may systematically bias development efforts away from the problems of the least-advantaged citizens (Flora & Flora, 2008) and that bias, in turn, can give rise to increased inequalities, poverty and marginalization. Therefore participation and democratic decision-making are essential to the self-help model of community development.

Effective community participation can lead to social and personal empowerment, economic development, and sociopolitical transformation. However, there are obstacles, which include the following: the power of central bureaucracies, the lack of local skills and organizational experience, political divisions, and the impact of national and transnational structures. Community power and grassroots democracy comprise a groundbreaking and insightful dimension that examines a collection of community initiatives and their potential of creating community actions in order to achieve broader socio-political change. While the community development approach doesn't assume that all important social, economic, or political problems of communities can be resolved by a community's own efforts, the idea of

mobilizing broad community participation is a prescribed complementary goal of any community development effort (Christenson & Robinson, 1989).

Indeed community participation brings many lasting benefits to people instead of being only a means of getting things done. It brings people together in creating and making decisions about their lives, and since people are actively involved, participation helps increase the voice of communities and promote a sense of ownership and control among the people. Rather than viewing them as passive recipients of grassroots organizations' services and projects, grassroots organizations will view them as partners who can shape, promote, and even deliver services and ultimately gain a stronger voice in shaping the physical, economic, political and social conditions in their communities by taking local actions.

Because power and privilege can easily and quite subtly be used to marginalize and silence people in both organizations and communities, such leadership qualities and actions can be effective in bringing about empowered organizations and ultimately communities. The move toward fundamental change requires leaders with a different kind of vision as well as commitment. These are "transformative" (Smock, 2004, p. 62) leaders who demonstrate a strong commitment in the principles of equality, equity and empowerment, particularly as they relate to gender and its intersections with differences based on age, income, education, and location. Leaders need to be committed to use power not as an instrument of domination and exclusion but as an instrument of liberation, inclusion, and equality. What is needed from local and national leaders is a strong commitment to the principle of social justice and concrete policies. Eventually, this will direct local actions that create conditions enabling marginalized groups to have equal access to the new knowledge and opportunities. This "transformative leadership" (Smock, 2004, p. 62) is not necessarily driven simply by considerations of efficiency (often

addressed in organizations' manuals) but rather by values of community organizing and sustainability.

The self-help literature (Christenson & Robinson, 1989) stresses that bringing people together to discuss their various concerns leads to consensus, as well as creating and implementing plans of action. In the Palestinian grassroots NGOs' case, people will be interested, motivated, and want to be involved if there are no structural impediments to their participation. The more community issues and problems become translated into technical questions, the more they discourage self-help and broad participation. Therefore grassroots NGOs need to translate these technical questions into broader policies which are understandable and ultimately encourage a community's participation. Effective community participation requires feasible and appropriate efforts to stimulate broader participation. These efforts are to ensure that community members understand their participation can make a difference in their lives and initiate as well as extend their options that are practical, feasible and likely to create community autonomy.

It is very important for Palestinian grassroots NGOs to have a distinct conception of interest formation that shapes the approach to democratic decision-making, methods of deliberation, identification of community priorities, and development of strategies of action (Smock, 2004). The more grassroots NGOs promote individual participation, inclusion, and equal voice, the more they will promote genuine community deliberation over important issues, and eventually produce decisions efficiently that further the organization's strategic objectives for the community in the wider public sphere.

In sum, all the above principles--effective community participation, transformative leadership, democratic decision-making--are the building-blocks of an empowered community

and ultimately foster the creation of “community autonomy” (Christenson & Robinson, 1989, p. 57), community ownership and sustainability. These principles seek to get people to work outside of an individual or special interest frame, and instead work in the community field. These principles are about community-building based on social justice, valuing a shared identity, and developing community power. The community built in such a frame or model fights to have a voice within the public decision-making process, encouraging broad community participation based on the application of the abstract principle of social justice. This ultimately emulates the self-help approach, creating communities acting on their own behalf and capable of generating long-term changes necessary to reform the current structure and advocate for a more equitable society.

#### *Gender and Development Framework*

The specific gender focus of this study is on the efforts of Palestinian NGOs (Palestinian grassroots NGOs), whose mission is to enhance the economic, social, and political conditions of Palestinian women living in the countryside. Talking about gender in Palestinian development is now commonplace. Rarely does a project proposal get submitted without a section dealing with the gender issues involved. This reflects the global move towards a greater understanding of the extent to which gender has an impact on the development process. Grassroots NGOs such as Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees (PARC) and Union of Agriculture Relief Committees (UAWC) work with women and help build their capacity to defend their rights and interests at a variety of levels. They provide extension services, awareness campaigns and support activities such as counseling, training, and logistics to individual women and to women’s groups at the community level. They also mobilize rural women to enhance their participation in the development process and in the realization of a democratic Palestinian society, based on gender

equality and social justice.<sup>1</sup> Understanding how women individually and collectively address the organization's structural constraints around gender can develop women's future strategies for equity and equality in the organization and the community at large.

The theoretical framework used in this study also builds upon theoretical developments within the gender and development (GAD) movement which has focused on gender power relations. Kabeer (1994) argues that gender is not just about women and men but about their power relations and that a relational analysis of gender inequalities within the socio-economic development process has far reaching implications. A gender analysis can be used to understand and address the problems of women's subordination by looking at the institutionalized basis of male power and privilege. PARC has extensive experience addressing these issues through its Gender Focus Program.

Gender-analysis frameworks have been used in development practice, to varying degrees, since the 1970s generally and since the mid-1980s in the Palestinian context. They aim to provide methods to gather and use sex-disaggregated and gender-related data and inform development interventions at various stages, from project/program conception and design through evaluation. They aim to promote gender-aware development practice by ensuring that gender is taken into consideration at every stage of program implementation.

Kandiyoti (1996) describes gender theory in the Middle East as having been intensely local, grappling with regionally based histories and specificities. She suggests that feminist thought and scholarship in the Middle East has gone through three phases: first, post-colonial state formation where the issues of women's position were articulated through nationalism; second, modernization and development, which led to a conflict between traditional and modern

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<sup>1</sup> PARC website: [www.pal-arc.org](http://www.pal-arc.org)

views of the role of women in society; and third, dialogues within feminism, with selective and uneven incorporation of concepts of feminist theory into Middle Eastern Studies.

Molyneux (1985) describes how women, while sharing common interests, do not share a consensus about the scope and goal of gender interests. She suggests that movements for women's development and gender equity are constructed around practical and strategic interests. There are different focuses to development depending on which of these interests is emphasized. There has been a comprehensive treatment of the issue of women's participation in employment, which has looked at both the formal labor market (Hammami, 1997; Rockwell 1984; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 1993) and in the informal sector (Abdo, 1995; Lang & Mohanna, 1992). This study draws on the literature to examine how PARC works to empower women in rural areas economically and socially through its projects and programs.

Gender- analysis frameworks can contribute to ensuring that development practice promotes gender equity, but their use is only one element in the process and cannot alone ensure that gender considerations are integrated into development practice. Their use needs to be combined with and based on clear political and theoretical underpinnings and specific goals and objectives. Sweetman (1997) mentioned an analytical framework that is constructed around three interdependent levels or elements within an organization; the substantive (organizational mission, ideology, and policies); the structural (procedures and mechanisms for enforcing its goals and objectives, its strategy); and the cultural (shared beliefs, values, and attitudes).

The success of gender work depends on clear objectives and ultimately the need to be mindful of the challenges experienced if attempts are made to reduce “the political project of gender and development ...to technical fix” (Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2004, p. 4). Kabeer's (1994) typology of gender policies is a useful tool to distinguish between different

organizational policy approaches namely: gender-blind policies, gender neutral policies, gender-ameliorative policies, and gender-transformative or redistributive policies.

Gender mainstreaming policy is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy of making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 1998, p. 6).

Because external donors require gender components in funded work and because the NGOs themselves have identified reduction of gender inequality among their goal, this study explores the extent that grassroots NGOs such as PARC and PAWC sustain a secular ideology that guarantees gender equality and social justice in rural communities. Chapter 5 addresses how women are empowered through their grassroots collective practices. To understand how gender is treated as part of the NGOs' secular ideology, it is important to examine how gender identity is formed at both the organization and community levels. Moser (1993, p. 5) has argued that many of those committed to integrating gender into their work at policy, program or project levels still lack the necessary planning principles and methodological tools. Porter and Smyth (1999, p. 326) point out, "Development institutions differ vary widely in the extent to which they are committed to gender equity, what that commitment entails and the means they propose to adopt in order to achieve related goals." Gender analysis frameworks have evolved in tandem with the evolution of the field of gender in development and are thus "based on very different understandings of the nature of power and inequality" (Kabeer, 1994, p. 270).



## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter states some background details about the Palestinian socio-economic context as well as grassroots NGOs as part of civil society. It is intended to provide some context for the two case study NGOs, PARC and UAWC. The remainder of this chapter focuses on research methods; the study design-type of qualitative design is presented as well as the rationale of using a qualitative study. The process of identifying research participants then follows. This chapter also provides a layout of the interview and interpretive process. I will then cover the reflexivity. Finally I will conclude with analysis of the methods tools' limitations and with validity and credibility issues.

### *Civil Society in Palestine*

As noted in Chapter 1, Palestinian grassroots organizations emerged as a response to a widespread need for collective mobility due to the Israeli colonial occupation that has indiscriminately destroyed community-led development opportunities. Since their establishment in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, Palestinian NGOs worked within the context of the Palestinian struggle to emphasize national identity in efforts to confront previous British and current Israeli colonial ambitions (Hilal, 1993). The deportation stage in 1948<sup>2</sup>, followed by the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), was parallel to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) in 1967 (Hilal, 1993). Accordingly, the study distinguishes three generations (Abdelhadi, 1997) of Palestinian NGOs based upon the type of services provided: Charitable Associations, Voluntary Grassroots Organizations, and Modern Organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> The deportation stage in 1948 took place during the Nakba ("the catastrophe"): the expulsion and dispossession of hundreds of thousands Palestinians from their homes and land in 1948 from historical Palestine. In 1948 more than 60 percent of the total Palestinian population was expelled. More than 530 Palestinian villages were depopulated and completely destroyed by Haganah (Jewish paramilitary organization) in what was then the British Mandate of Palestine from 1920 to 1948, which later became the core of the Israel Defense Forces.

Charitable Associations, as a first generation of NGOs, covered the period of the early twentieth century until the end of the seventies. Their charitable activities were mainly connected to the Palestinian National Struggle against colonial oppression. Their field of interest was to target martyrs' families, injured people, and families of political prisoners. In addition, they aimed to assist the refugees, families who had their homes demolished, and other targets in need. The majority of these charitable associations were women's associations that were led by female leaders and existed primarily in urban areas (Abdelhadi, 1997; Hilal, 1999).

The Israeli occupation since 1967 resulted not only in a stagnated development in the Palestinian territories, but in what Harvard economist Sara Roy described as a process of “de-development” (Roy, 2001). Consequently, several Palestinian-based parties and political factions, particularly the leftist political parties, took it upon themselves to mobilize and develop communities. During the first Intifada<sup>3</sup> in 1987, the political parties became increasingly organized and established several organizations that carried out the interests of the fractions for community development. This “second generation” of organizations has generally been considered Voluntary Grassroots Organizations (VGOs) (Abdlhadi, 1997; Hilal, 1999; Taraki, 1989). The aim of these organizations was to develop main sectors in society such as health and agriculture. They worked closely with key participants in these sectors such as workers, peasants, and students as well as specifically addressing women's issues.

VGOs have changed both structurally and ideologically over time and are now different from what they were in the early eighties (Hammami, 1995). Such changes have come in terms of entering a more professional sphere as organizations. Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees (PARC) and Palestinian Agriculture Working Committees (UAWC) are two large

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<sup>3</sup> The First Intifada (1987–1993) was a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in the Palestinian Territories. Palestinian actions primarily included nonviolent civil disobedience and resistance movement.

Palestinian grassroots NGOs created during the second generation and established by various leftist political factions as voluntary organizations; they have now become professional NGOs. They have been working in the agricultural sector for over 20 years in WBGS. Their central objective is to enhance the economic and social well-being of Palestinians in rural communities. They state that the Palestinian national struggle is inseparable from projects that aim to improve the living conditions of those under Israel's segregated legal system since 1967 (Hilal, 2003).

Modern Organizations are considered third generation organizations. These organizations were established due to the international efforts to support NGOs. Moreover, Modern Organizations resulted from the reduction in financial aid given to several grassroots NGOs that were associated with political factions and parties. This transformation emerged as an approach to coping with increased funding needs and international developmental interests, which were spread out in the 80's in Europe and the United States. These interests ran parallel to neoliberal economic policies centered around the diminishing role of the state, structural adjustment imposed by international aid organizations, and privatization of public services for private actors. The most prominent characteristics of these organizations are the emphasis on professionalism and specialization and efforts to link development with the preparation to build an independent state (Abdelhadi, 1997; Hilal, 1999).

#### *Research Subjects (PARC AND UAWC)*

Urban-based professional agronomists and engineers initiated wide-spread contact with thousands of farmers during the 1980s in an effort to both improve a declining agriculture sector and to encourage Palestinian self-sufficiency. UAWC and PARC aimed to diminish agriculture dependency on Israel and thereby to enhance national disengagement from the occupying power. PARC was established in 1983 and UAWC in 1986 in response to the vulnerable socio-political

circumstance of farmers that resulted from occupation policies in confiscating lands and water in the early eighties that directly harmed the interests of farmers and Palestinians.

The rationale for selecting these two NGOs is, as discussed later in this chapter, is based on my own personal connections. However, personal interest alone is not sufficient for justification in a scholarly study. UAWC and PARC are both highly influential NGOs within the Palestinian territories; their practices and orientations are models for many other Palestinian NGOs. Outside of the two NGOs' influence within the Palestinian NGO context, they also link Palestinians with the productive value of the land through agricultural practices, fostering an enhanced political identity tied to the national cause.

*Palestinian agriculture relief committee (PARC).* PARC emerged from the huge voluntary movement that prevailed and represents the broader situation (National Committees for Voluntary Movement) within the Palestinian Territories in the late 1970s and early 1980s (PARC documents). It was formed by a group of agronomists, agricultural engineers, pioneer farmers and vet doctors who were active in the voluntary movement and who were convinced that forming specialized agricultural voluntary groups would serve the farmers in 1983 in response to the lack of agricultural extension services for Palestinian farmers. This sector was intentionally ignored by the so-called Israeli Civil Administration – Agricultural Department, hoping that Palestinian farmers would desert their land and thus make it an easy target for confiscation. Since 1983 PARC has undergone a number of stages as an organization. The first stage, Voluntarism, lasted from 1983-1987; it was characterized by pure agricultural voluntary groups providing extension services to farmers concentrating on national issues political aspects more than specialized area agriculture aiming to protect Palestinian lands from confiscation through planting uncultivated areas. The second stage was characterized by playing a special role

in the first Intifada by establishing of Public Committees and enhancing the household economy and providing humanitarian aid. Thus more attention was given to agricultural issues in addition to the national agenda, with more geographical outreaching capacity rather than capacity-building issues.

The third stage, Institutionalization, which lasted from 1993-1999, witnessed the development of PARC's first core program and sub-programs in land development and rural women's development. In this stage, one of the main developments that distinguished PARC was that it began to cooperate with grassroots organizations and formed administrative branches for development. As a result of these growing capacities, the networks in the rural areas expanded. Consequently, the final stage was the Networking stage, which continued from 2000 to the present. The objective in this stage was the organization of the beneficiaries in community-based organizations and committees. In doing this, the efforts became part of PARC's vision for building of a Palestinian democratic and civil society.

*Union of agriculture working committees (UAWC).* The Union was founded in 1986 as a non-profit organization by a group of volunteers and agronomists. The priorities of the Union at the beginning focused on struggling with the Israeli Occupation's procedures that marginalized agriculture and destroyed the infrastructure of Palestinian agriculture. The Union, in its early days, depended entirely on volunteers, in addition to forming agricultural committees in the WB and GS to set the priorities of farmers and help the Union in implementing its programs and community activities.

UAWC initially focused on forming Agricultural Cooperatives and Committees in the different Palestinian rural areas of the West Bank and Gaza. In its second stage institutional development for effectiveness 1991-1997, UAWC started to develop its basic by-laws and its

financial and administrative systems. UAWC expanded its focus to include olive oil marketing, agricultural extension and land reclamation. In third stage 1997-2000, UAWC strengthened and built international relations and partnerships, and its programs expanded to reach new villages and communities. A change occurred on the nature of UAWC's programs at the beginning of 2001 with the Second Intifada. Emergency programs became the bulk of UAWC's work, in response to the socio-economic difficulties resulting from the Israeli occupation's policies. UAWC focused during this period on projects to create job opportunities, aiming on enhancing food security, and increasing the income of rural families. UAWC developed a five-year strategic plan to contribute effectively to a sustainable and efficient agriculture.

### *The Research Methods*

This study examines the extent to which delivery of services provided by NGOs grassroots organizations can lead to progressive community change. Under what conditions does delivery of services lead to progressive community change? What guides practitioners in their community practices through different projects and programs? What are the processes by which community change is co-opted (by donors, regional organizations, community culture) and how does that impact progressive community change? How do these processes play out in looking at community-based gender development programs in Palestine?

To acquire a comprehensive analysis of grassroots NGOs within the Palestinian context and to better understand their dynamics, I conducted an ethnographic case study of two prominent, well-established Palestinian grassroots NGOs, PARC and UAWC, that have been working in the agriculture sector for more than 20 years in West Bank (described above). Because of their similarities (working in the same sector, similar historical political origins, and

political orientations), these two NGOs are not compared or differentiated, but instead treated in this study as indicators of larger trends amongst the Palestinian NGO sector.

A variety of qualitative methods are utilized, including in-depth individual interviews, informal discussion, and participant observation at the organizational and community levels.

### *Study Design-Type of Qualitative Design*

Ethnographic methods generally involve an engagement with everyday lives of a group of people and the continual writing up of observations, and reactions into field and later, memos (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). At its broadest, ethnography describes a variety of analytical practices in which researchers use their embodied selves as their primary research instruments. Here, involving in the community social sight allows researchers to understand the complexity of actors' cultural practices and meanings (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Rawlins, 1998). Ethnographic methods therefore allowed me to explore the processes of NGOs' policy makers and practitioner's conceptualization and construction of practices, and the impacts of NGOs' development interventions. Importantly, direct interaction with NGOs' practitioners, policy makers and community members provided me crucial engagement, rather than at the conceptual level. This allowed me to develop my critiques of these NGOs' dynamics and development policies and practices and thus informed me of the sort of community change they seek to achieve through their different development projects and programs at the community level.

To acquire a comprehensive analysis of these grassroots NGOs within the Palestinian context and to better understand their dynamics, an ethnographic case study conducted using a variety of qualitative methods and review of documents is needed. Qualitative methods used include: individual in depth interviews, group discussion, informal meetings and participant observation at the organizational and community levels. Reviewing their annual reports and

other documents also reveals additional data about these grassroots NGOs' goals and process. I conducted in-depth interviews with policy makers at the headquarters of these two NGOs, PARC and UAWC. These in-depth interviews gave insight about the growth of these NGOs in the changing political context, the relationship between these NGOs and their donors and how this relationship evolved since their establishment. The interviews also provided in-depth information of the process of how these NGOs transformed from being voluntary NGOs to professional NGOs and what these NGOs stand for through their vision, mission statements and policies. In-depth interviews with these organizations' practitioners were also needed and generated a deeper understanding of how these practitioners can transmit the grassroots organization policies and strategies through local community's activities and thus how these practitioners conceptualize main terms such as leadership and community change in their community practices. The interviews also indicate how these practitioners perceived their roles as practitioners and what guides them in their community practices.

I also conducted in-depth interviews with community members who benefited from these NGOs projects at their CBOs, cooperatives and local committees. Participating in the CBOs activities provided me with a deep understanding of what capacities these CBOs have and to what extent they can be employed and transmitted into actions at local and national levels and therefore promote community progressive change. Additionally, I engaged in participant observation at the organizational level. I attended two main activities that were hosted by the research subjects. The first one was the newly graduate agronomists' training course graduation hosted by PARC. The second one was the annual meeting of the farmers' local committees in West-Bank. I engaged in participant observation attending their meetings and activities at two



community based organizations in two different villages at two districts in south and north of West-Bank.

### *Rationale for Using Qualitative Methods*

Qualitative research is a way of describing an event in its context and is useful for investigating complex, new or relatively unexplored areas. A central principle of the qualitative approach is the recognition that researchers cannot be truly neutral or separate from data generation and analysis. The focus of qualitative research tends to be in the understanding of the meaning embedded in participant experiences through an open-ended, unstructured and subjective approach (Daley & Jeris, 2004).

Therefore, qualitative research methods tend to achieve a greater level of depth and detailed data. Qualitative methods create openness between all parties and can help generate new theories. Participating subjects can discuss issues that are important to them, rather than responding to closed questions and they can also clarify ambiguities or confusion over concepts (O'Neill, 2006). It seems reasonable to suggest that using qualitative methods provides a better understanding of NGOs, their situation and the community dynamics that they are working with rather than looking at demographic statistics. The qualitative research angle provides an in-depth understanding of the world, as seen through the eyes of the research participants. The analysis of policy makers, practitioners, community members at these two NGOs is very important in this sense.

Crawley (1998) argues that qualitative methods (i.e. ethnography and participant observation) allow the researcher to better engage with the research participants and to analyze the subject's own condition with the assistance of the researcher. Thus, the researcher may too provide "voice" to marginalized groups, allowing the marginalized another venue to express

different ways of understanding. This case study will involve the following specific actions: reviews and content analysis of annual reports, in-depth individual interviews, and participant observation at the organizational and local community levels.

### *Case Studies*

Case study research excels at increasing one's understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Most of studies that were previously done on these NGOs looked at the organizations as one functioning body. What distinguishes my study is that it was taken at different levels in these organizations. This study considers the dynamic interaction between all levels of these organizations and all aspects of organizations. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships and have been used across a variety of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology to examine real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods (Yin, 2003). Yin (1992) has identified some specific types of case studies: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Stake (1995) included three others: *intrinsic* - when the researcher has an interest in the case; *instrumental* - when the case is used to understand more than what is obvious to the observer; *collective* - when a group of cases is studied. Exploratory cases are sometimes considered as a prelude to social research. Descriptive cases require a descriptive theory to be developed before starting the project. I would consider my ethnographic case study therefore as intrinsic. Pyecha (1988) used this method in a special education study, plying a pattern-matching procedure. In all of the above types of case studies, there can be single-case or multiple-case applications.

Case studies provide systematic ways of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results. As a result the researcher may gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did, and what might become important to look at more extensively in future research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Yin (1984, 2003) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Case studies are complex because they generally involve multiple sources of data, may include multiple cases within a study, and produce large amounts of data for analysis. Researchers from many disciplines use the case study method to build upon theory, to produce new theory, to dispute or challenge theory, to explain a situation, to provide a basis to apply solutions to situations, to explore, or to describe an object or phenomenon. The advantages of the case study method are its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations and its public accessibility through written reports (Stake, 1995).

Critics of the case study method believe that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings. Others feel that the intense exposure to study of the case biases the findings. Some dismiss case study research as a useful tool that is only an exploratory tool (Stake, 1995). However, a key strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process, as the researcher determines in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use with the data to answer the research questions. Tools to collect data can include surveys, interviews, documentation review, participant observation and the collection of physical artifacts (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

### *Identifying Participants: Honing in on the Research Subjects*

Prior to identifying participants, I addressed several questions in identifying the specific NGOs in Palestine and the geographic boundaries of my research. I limited my investigation to the two prominent and well established Palestinian grassroots NGOs, PARC and UAWC. Importantly, these two NGOs were established by two left leaning political parties at mid-1980s. The political affiliation is vital, in order to question the institution and therefore to enhance their orientation. Due to my previous work with key grassroots organizations dealing with different sectors, such as health and agriculture, and as a civil society activist in the steering committee of PNGO (Palestinian non-governmental organizations network), I come equipped with ready access to my desired research subjects. Consequently, this helped in building rapport and contacting their CBO's, along with my previous experience working with these CBO's, in the planning, monitoring and the evaluation process and many capacity building projects in gender issues.

Having strong access to these two NGOs by working with them enabled me to conduct all the interviews in person and to have connections to their branches at different districts. Therefore, I was able to contact community members through their CBOs, and local committees and cooperatives. I limited my research to one geographic region in Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The Gaza Strip branch was excluded from my geographic research area due to the Israeli occupation siege over Gaza since 2000. Since then, it has been impossible to receive permission to enter Gaza. This led me to limit my research only to the West Bank.

Second I sought participants who were affiliated to these two NGOs. Three levels were identified at these two NGOs. The first level is the policymakers' level, those who are directors of department or programs and therefore decide about these organizations policies and strategies.

The practitioners' level is the second one, those who are transmitting these policies and strategies through practices by implementing different projects and programs. These practitioners are working in nine different districts divided into three main branches (North, South, and Mid West Bank) according to these NGOs branches. I focused my interviews on practitioners who have at least 5 years' experience working in these NGOs. This would ensure that they have enough experience to carry out analysis. Beyond this requirement, I aimed for gender diversity in order to capture differences in perspectives, approaches and programs.

Directors of these NGOs were contacted by phone, and initial informal meetings were arranged with them. During the preliminary phone interview I explained the study objectives, the scope of my research and the geographic districts. I received the organizations' support and they provided access to their facilities and resources such as a list of their staff emails and cell phones so I could plan and schedule my field visits. They were generous to offer a place to stay, as I would stay a week in every district. They also facilitated my transportation to their CBOs in certain remote communities that have difficulties in public transportation. I then called the branches' directors to schedule my field visit to their districts and to select my participants (practitioners) from different districts based on a number of years of experience. I decided to stay a week in every selected district, so practitioners would have flexible time to schedule my interview because they travel every day to work with their targets in remote communities. In addition, I also participated in their community activities. I met informally with a few of them as colleagues. This provided more insight into these organizations' orientations and increased my awareness of other identifiable and relative topics. In the process of these conversations with practitioners I received additional information about nominated CBOs and community groups they work with. Thus I selected my targeted CBOs, cooperatives and community committees

based on these organizations working years' experience with these communities' groups that are not less than 5 years. I ended up with a list of categories of these community groups that represents women and farmers. Although it is very difficult to identify the exact number of participants who should be interviewed in ethnographic studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tuckett, 2004), certain criteria can help and the saturation of data can limit the number of participants.

In all, I interviewed (30) participants who were policy makers from these two organizations. This group included 24 men and 6 women. They all worked in Ramallah at the headquarters of these NGOs. I also interviewed (18) practitioners from these two NGOs who were working in different districts in North of West Bank (Jenin and Tulkarim), South of West Bank (Hebron and Bethlehem) and in the Middle of the West Bank (Ramallah). This group included 10.men and 8 women. I interviewed (27) community members, (16) women and (11) men who were active in different local farmers committees, farmers cooperatives, women's cooperative, and the women's club (CBO) in four different communities (villages) located in the south of West Bank and north of West Bank (See table 1, page 195).

### *Interview Process*

I scheduled interviews at a time and location chosen by participants. I explained the study design and interview process to participants. I read the informed consent to get their approval to conduct the interview. I did not get their signature as I waived that due to the intense political critical situation in Palestine. The interview consisted of a number of open-ended, in-depth questions. Open-ended interviewing often uses a simple, straightforward structure of predetermined questions, whereby the ethnographer employs the same questions set to ensure consistency among interviews. The questions set acts as initial probe that is augmented throughout the interview through follow-up questions based on each interviewee's responses

(Hoffmann, 2007). The questions flowed easily from one to another. This allowed me to develop the interview in the most productive way and thoroughly explored all fruitful comments given by the participant. This method offers a certain amount of flexibility by allowing the informant to expand on any question or topic, which in turn allows for an increase in the amount of data collected and heightens the study's validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). At the same time, open-ended questions and probing gave the participants the opportunity to respond in their words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses as quantitative methods do. Open-ended questions have the ability to evoke responses that are meaningful and culturally salient to the participant, unanticipated by the researcher, and are rich and explanatory in nature. Another strength in open-ended interviewing is that by permitting the informant to expand on questions and raise new topics, it allows the participant to determine where the interview goes and thus offers a certain degree of agency to the participants, permitting the participants to cover topics of their interest, which may or may not be of interest or intent of the researcher, but allows for greater contextualization of the interviewees. In my study I conducted in-depth interviews with decision-makers (women and men), focusing on how policies and strategies changed and were constructed through 20 years, and how this affects organizations' structures and capacities in light of political and cultural environments. I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews with practitioners focusing on the practitioner's conceptualization of their methods and approaches at the community-level to gain a deeper understanding of how these practitioners can transmit the organization's policies and strategies through community activities into actions. I also conducted in-depth interviews and participant observations with local community members and activists at women's and farmers' cooperatives. I attended general meetings at both PARC and UAWC.

### *Interpretive Process*

Different types of information and data has been generated during data collection and procedures have been taken to guarantee the validity and confidentiality of the data. All the organizations and individuals' information acquired during the individual interviews are highly confidential and anonymous. No names that identify people, organizations or communities appeared in my dissertation document. All the field notes and interviews were coded in a way that would not reflect the actual persons or organizations and were kept in a secure place, accessible just to the researcher according to the IRB procedures. Most of my recordings were transcribed by transcriptionist, except for certain interviews that contain critical information that questioned the transparency of the organizations, so interviewees were protected. I recorded the interviews rather than writing notes to maintain the natural flow of the discussion, this also helped to avoid demonstrating bias by focusing on the notes that are making immediate sense or were perceived as being directly relevant to my interest. Not every interview was transcribed because of the use of a technique known as tape analysis which entails taking notes from a playback of the tape recorder interview. In addition to that, all of my field notes, observations, informal talks, meetings and visits were hand written. I processed and coded each transcript as it arrived from the transcriptionist based on answers to specific main questions and the level of analysis. Quotes related to certain questions and reflected specific ideas and definitions in specific chapters were grouped under each idea with the participant identified. I translated these quotes into English as I conducted all of my interviews in my local Arabic language. After deep analysis of the quotes within interviews, I then proceeded to interrogate the general trends of the content that I had phrased in my own words and to evaluate them in the context of the literature on NGOs and community development.



## *Reflexivity*

Qualitative researchers usually advocate reflexivity in the research process, so that unconscious beliefs or feelings will not have unknown influence on the study design or implementation, as an inventory of existing knowledge about the research topic (McCracken, 1988). Reflexivity therefore requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining outside of one's subject matter while conducting research.

*Personal interest.* The Palestinian narrative is one of progress yet it is rooted in a seemingly unending struggle for justice, a struggle which touches the lives of millions who hope one day to see a people liberated so that they might flourish. Communities continue to thrive in the refugee camps of Gaza despite the tragedy of the Palestinian people. Forced relocation from deeply-rooted communities has in many ways made the Palestinians more resilient. Gaza is *the* most densely populated region in the world. However, this proximity is neither stifling nor oppressive; it is at the core of the shared identity of Gazans. The houses in a Gaza refugee camp have now lasted over sixty years. Originally meant to be temporary domiciles, the houses may appear small, but to those living in these houses they are the center of their world, places where neighbors and family convene, creating the illusion that this small temporary domicile built out of tragic necessity is indeed home. This spirit is what keeps the Palestinian struggle alive. These are the circumstances in which I was raised.

My own experiences were shaped in El-Shati' camp. I was the eighth child of ten, born to a loving and strong mother who incessantly reminded us of the struggle we are a part of as Palestinians. My father, a UN employee in workplace relocation for unemployed refugees (despite having only completed a 6<sup>th</sup> grade education), was no less political as he would often

share his narrative of the tragedy of the Nakba<sup>4</sup> with us children. The seeds of a critical consciousness were planted in me by my parents, the importance of neighbors emphasized by my siblings and friends, and the conditions of the refugee camp, the community continuously reiterated my connections to a common humanity, despite persistent struggle against an occupying force. Although the power inherent in our social connectivity was very evident, I, like many other Palestinians, did not come to appreciate these bonds until after I had left for college.

I first knew I wanted to leave Gaza for Birzeit University at nine years of age when a group of student volunteers came to our refugee camp to teach reading and writing skills to the illiterate. Even though I was very young at the time, this experience always stuck with me; the students' emphasis on community service and social progress inspired me.

As an undergraduate student at Birzeit University I was immediately drawn to the student movements and became very involved in their activities. Activism and protests have long been a part of Palestinian students' passage through university. The student movements' activities ranged from demanding access to quality education to fair pay, to organizing against Israeli colonial actions directed at our university (e.g., checkpoints and political detention). The political party-connected student movement also succeeded in embedding students within the Palestinian cause. These experiences transformed and shaped my personal and professional outlook on life, be it political, economic, or cultural. Being a university student during the Intifada, the first Palestinian uprising from 1987 to 1993 made my undergraduate years as a sociology major unique as well as quite politically and socially formative. Heavily involved with student groups, I attended workshops, engaged in community outreach, and organized sit-ins. One of the most

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<sup>4</sup> Every year Palestinians commemorate the Nakba ("the catastrophe"): the expulsion and dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes and land in 1948. In 1948 more than 60 percent of the total Palestinian population was expelled. More than 530 Palestinian villages were depopulated and completely destroyed by Haganah ([Jewish paramilitary](#) organization in what was then the [British Mandate of Palestine](#) from 1920 to 1948, which later became the core of the [Israel Defense Forces](#)<http://electronicintifada.net/bytopic/171.shtml>

important activities in which I was involved during my university years was community volunteer efforts in rural areas, which addressed issues of land reclamation, school and community center rehabilitation, and an array of other agricultural-related activities. I was also an active member of the student council and eventually became head of the Social Committee of Birzeit University. My social and political activism enriched my overall education and provided me with both theoretical and practical experience. My years at Birzeit University helped me to develop new ways of thinking. My character and ideological outlook was most certainly influenced by my involvement in the student movement. Such experiences also inspired me to work towards lasting social change.

Transitioning from university life to professional and activist life was another formative experience that shaped who I am today. Upon applying for my first job in the civil society sector with a very well-known NGO, PARC, the staff members saw in me a passion and idealism that they thought would fit well with the political perspective and ideologies of their institution. I was told that my ideological perspective was a deciding factor in being hired with PARC, and that progressive ideology promoting social justice, gender equality, and social outcomes were central to PARC's work. However, I saw gaps in how this institution--and others similar to it--functioned. While these NGOs had a well-meaning progressive perspective in their community-building endeavors, I witnessed a degree of cooptation by a number of groups, particularly donors. Moreover, I found these organizations' projects addressed issues of community development on a surface level without really addressing underlying structural issues, such as patriarchy. While working with PARC, it became evident that there were new concerns regarding movements supporting the Palestinian liberation itself: without addressing these power

structures, developmental endeavors may be incapable of addressing the problem of occupation and self-governance.

Reflexivity urges researchers "to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research" (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228). I have been involved with PARC for six years. I also volunteered and participated with UAWC in many fundamental meetings about the organization's vision and policies as a general assembly member. Many of the participants were knowledgeable of my political background. I found that my research question emerged from my experience as a professional at these NGOs and as a Palestinian political activist who has always had faith in these particular NGOs in the struggle for social justice and against Israeli occupation. In certain interviews with policy makers and practitioners who have clear political orientations, I found it important to distance myself and to direct discussion in a less judgmental manner. It was also important to direct the discussion away from any complaints about these NGOs with my colleagues to more constructive critical conversations. The process of reflexivity helped me to separate my researcher from my organizer and activist self. As a result of this research, this study aims to allow organizations and participants to see their work with some critical new insight. I also aim to contribute to theoretical and practical reflection on their ongoing work with communities, including more radical changes and more strategic actions.

#### *In-depth Interview Limitations*

A possible methodological weakness of interviewing in general is that the interviewee might provide an "official account," a reporting of what the interviewee feels ought to happen rather than what did happen (Bourdieu, 1977; Hoffmann, 2007, p. 330), which can be a very serious issue in interview-generated data. However ethnographers address this weakness by

triangulating the accounts of interviewees whenever possible by discussing the same topic from different perspectives or by collecting data about certain topics by using more than one method, such as combining interview data with observational data and archival data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The minimal structure of the open-ended interview enables the researcher to freely follow whatever topics may arise and empowers the interviewee to share information that might not have been directly solicited. However, this greater flexibility also produces more complex power relations and substantial emotional demands (Hoffmann, 2007). As Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2002) wrote, careful attention to shifting power and emotional labor are not “simply ways to wring more data out of research participants” (p. 218) as the researcher should be better equipped to learn more about the interviewee and the topic of interviews, as well as the interview dynamics.

#### *Assessing Data Quality (Validity and Credibility)*

An examination of all data collected using field-notes, participant observations, interviews, group discussion and secondary data resources helped improve validity vis-a-vis triangulation of these methods. My comments and observations during the data collection identified any personal observations or feelings during the data analysis. The use of different sources of information (grassroots organizations policy makers at headquarters and practitioners at districts, and community leaders and members), as well as different types of methods such as individual interviews, informal discussion, participant observation and content analysis, improved the credibility of the study. In addition to that data (field-notes and interviews outcomes), personal, methodological and interpretation notes will be available in order to provide evidence and reliability. Additionally, in order to provide more credibility to the study, it

would be of immense importance to discuss and review the findings with the community members and specialized people in that same field.

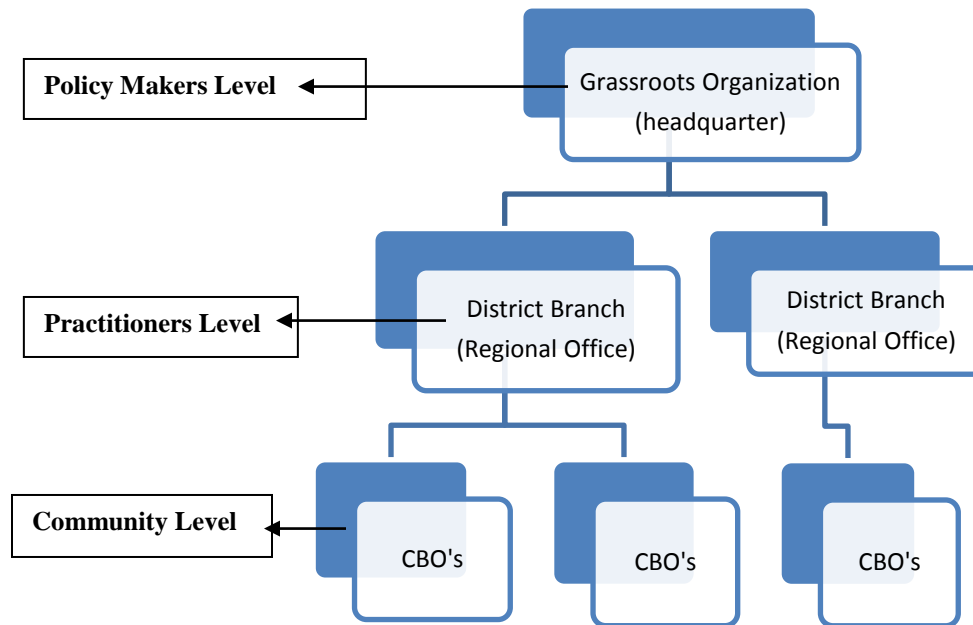


Figure 1. The Levels of Data Collection

## CHAPTER FOUR: CO-OPERATION OR COOPTATION: PALESTINIAN GRASSROOTS NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND DONOR RELATIONSHIPS

*We didn't have any external relationship with anyone when we started. We rejected any external funding. It was the philosophy of the institution to refuse funding based on that foreign institutions working in the principles of improving the living conditions of Palestinians under occupation and we were fully politically aware of this stand. We used to reject these principles. We do not want to depend on a story of improving conditions of life. We want issues related to the Palestinian struggle and to rely on ourselves... (Participant 1, personal communication, September 14, 2009).*

### *Introduction*

Traditionally, grassroots movements have been integral to linking Palestinian communities to socio-political issues. Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) stemming from these movements have also taken the service provision role in the absence of a stable central authority. Today, NGOs working in fields such as health, education, and agriculture represent some of the largest, most efficient service organizations, surpassing the Palestinian National Authority ministries in terms of budget, staffing, and experience (Hanafi & Tabar, 2005).

The central purpose of this chapter is to critically explore the engagement of donor agencies with NGOs and how this relationship impacts Palestinian community development. In doing so, this chapter highlights how the interactions between donors and NGOs are not only predicated on a Western model of civil society, but also evolve around those Western neoliberal institutional mechanisms and disciplinary discourses. As a result it affects the ability of local NGOs to adapt to the institutional requirements set by international donors. Understanding these dynamics is critical to not only Palestine, but other regions with heavy external donor influence.

To understand these changes, and the role and future of NGOs requires understanding how the relationship between NGOs and international networks of donors influence and alter the ways NGOs function. This chapter argues that NGOs in Palestine cannot be understood without

a close examination of the systemic changes that have taken place within these NGOs, in light of their perceived operation as professionalized grassroots institutions that are non-partisan, non-ideological, non-profit, and most critically a-political. While there is no doubt that donor relationships have proven beneficial in certain instances, truly empowering the most marginalized, here I am focused on a corrosive relationship serving two purposes: first, to alter the political orientation of the NGO, and; second, to influence the NGO into a direction fundamentally at odds with the NGO's community change orientation and more in line with the interests of the donors.

Based on my fieldwork, this study will then look at the case of two Palestinian grassroots NGOs, PARC and UAWC, whose political orientations have been altered by their donor relationships into those of so-called professional NGOs. All quotes are taken from interviews conducted during my fieldwork in Palestine during August 2009 - January 2010 and preliminary interviews during June - August 2008. In order to avoid placing any risk on respondents, the participants are not identified. This chapter will examine the depoliticization of NGOs in Palestine that has fundamentally transformed the capacity of Palestinian civil society to challenge oppressive social systems. This in turn diminishes the capacity of NGOs to empower individual Palestinians to act collectively.

The remainder of this chapter will deal with the multi-layered social system and how it impacts the orientation of the NGOs. First, the chapter addresses the issue of the donor organizations. Next, it covers another aspect of the orientation, namely how the NGOs respond to donor influence in a section titled "Acquiescences." Finally, it closes with a discussion in the "Conclusions" section.



### *Funding: Faces Behind the Money*

PARC and UAWC have been working in the agricultural sector for over 20 years in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGs) to enhance the economic and social well-being of Palestinians in rural communities. They state that the Palestinian national struggle is inseparable from projects that aim to improve the living conditions of those under the Israeli segregated legal system (Hilal, 2003). However, as will be discussed below, both of these NGOs have become increasingly professionalized. These two NGOs are not compared or differentiated, but instead are used to create a larger sample for this study that provides indicators of larger trends in the Palestinian NGO sector.

The factionalization of the grassroots movement (Hammami, 1995) in the early and mid-1980s was one of the first steps towards the institutionalization of NGOs such as PARC and UAWC, particularly as factions developed their own women's, health, or agriculture committees. In the mid-1980s, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) made financing available to organizations through their allied factions as did a growing number of foreign donor organizations. It was clear at that time that many of the movement-based NGOs were predominantly used as a means of recruitment for particular factions (Hanafi & Tabar, 2003). They saw their activities ranging from consciousness-raising to delivering much needed services (health, education, agriculture extension, daycare) as a means to a political end, in order to promote a particular faction (though broadly still to mobilize the population to resist the occupation (Hammami, 1995)).

The relationship between Palestinian political factions and civil society organizations captured the attention of many scholars, academics, and politicians (Hammami, 1995; Hanafi & Tabar, 2005). The observed relationships have raised many issues regarding the persistent

tension between NGOs, political factions and the phenomenon of foreign funding. Much of this has led to a discussion about the tools NGOs use to penetrate the outer sphere or shape societal frameworks for both political and social mobilization, affecting the democratization of Palestinian society.

NGOs emerged in the Palestinian territories as a direct response to the Israeli occupation (Barghouthi, 1994). In an attempt to socially mobilize a community whose sustainable development opportunities had been destroyed by the occupation, organizations arose whose goal was to stimulate progress among an entire community, fostering a shared, collective identity. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority would eventually shift the goals of NGOs towards strengthening the democratic role of such organizations as opposed to public policy and produce social change (Wood, 1997).

In the 1990s, Palestinian mass movements withdrew and were severed from their popular base. As a result NGOs emerged, rallying around a notion of civil society (Hammami, 1995). This long process not only saw the transformation of broad-based grassroots movement into discrete professional NGOs, much like PARC and UAWC, but also witnessed ideological and organizational crises. One of the grassroots NGOs leaders elaborated:

I think that over the periods of the first intifada, grassroots NGOs were linked organically with the national action and intellectual reference. As a socialist, Marxist-Leninist party with his main idea of leading the masses by working with people. This came in specific political circumstances and at the peak of the popular uprising. It came when the Palestinian political parties started reprogramming themselves politically and intellectually, and started thinking about the future and about facing the Israeli policies of repression... (Participant 20, personal communication, June 20, 2008).

Such changes have come in terms of NGOs entering more professionalized spheres in an attempt to gain a larger base and a more legitimate organizational anchor against the political hierarchy. In the context of donor dependency, the autonomy of local civil society organizations is not a

guarantee though it is a crucial issue. Biekart (1999) pointed out that reliance on donor-funds can reproduce the internal relations of hierarchy and elitism with local community groups and render them less accountable to their members; therefore, cooptation is a critical concern for these NGOs who serve as the bulwark for building civil society.

In the past, these organizations took political stands that were well connected to the national cause and to their political perspective. One NGO founder said as much:

We didn't have any external relationship with anyone when we started. We rejected any external funding. It was the philosophy of the institution to refuse funding based on that foreign institutions working in the principles of improving the living conditions of Palestinians under occupation and we were fully politically aware of this stand. We used to reject these principles. We do not want to depend on a story of improving conditions of life. We want issues related to the Palestinian struggle and to rely on ourselves... (Participant 01, personal communication, September 14, 2009).

But things have changed since then. Dutch government funding accounted for 30% of the total funding of one of these researched NGOs.

Relationship with funders is interrelated. I mean here, when one of our funders found that we were able to implement the project efficiently in less than one year- the project that was an approximately 30% of the total institution's financing- this convinced them to give us more funding to many more programs or even to supervise the implementation of other institutions. The more the institution has proved its capacity in the project management in professional, effective and transparent way and without bias to a particular target group, the more this funder increased the funding. This also pushed the funder to highlight certain weaknesses in the organization to be considered, which in turn helped the organization to identify faintness and thus to develop plans to avoid them... (Participant 17, personal communication, Sept 17, 2009).

NGOs had been focused on a direct participatory approach that involved members of the community, thereby reinforcing the critical importance of civil society. However, in recent times - specifically after the 1993 Oslo Accords were signed, establishing a Palestinian Authority - a significant evolution of aims took place in an attempt to gain more legitimacy in the region and as a direct response to funding sources. Grassroots NGOs such as PARC and UAWC that were established by political factions in the Palestinian territories would add further goals to their

portfolios (Hilal, 1999). These goals included the growing professional technical specialization dealing with the social and economic problems of the region. The NGOs provided services outside of the scope of the political decision-making process (Hanafi & Tabar, 2003). As a result, the technocratic cadres of these NGOs grew significantly, slowly eclipsing the more organic, grassroots features of the organization.

When examining the effects of civil society organizations on Palestinian society, it is important to recognize their contribution to the emerging Palestinian political system (Giacaman, 1998). Grassroots organizations must be dealt with from the perspective of the extent of their contribution to the democratization of Palestinian society reinforcing political participation in national decision-making, and promoting civil society values such as citizenship, transparency, good governance, equality and justice. Such democratization and tools of governance are tools of modernity. Much of the conflict between civil society organizations and political factions is the result of a missing element of partnership with the donors. In fact, this relationship does not constitute a reflection of an equal relationship between the Global North and the countries of the Global South. Thus, in the neoliberal vein, these “partnerships” contribute to the reproduction of poverty and underdevelopment (Kurzum, 1999). To varying degrees, the relationships emphasize donor interests over the local community interests, thus creating and reproducing the preexisting power structures that NGOs were tasked to challenge. Their projects ranged from capacity building to land reclamation (all very important features in the broader struggle), though they stopped short of promoting prolonged collective action that would decouple Palestinian dependency from the Israeli economy by fostering robust local economies and enhanced subsistence livelihoods.

International donors succeeded in controlling these NGOs and in shifting the community level focus of development. “Thus donors tried and succeeded in the long run to contain the civil society and therefore, every society has become easy to mold...” (Participant 15, personal communication, June 20, 2008).

These extralocal donors had their voices and political perspectives inserted into the Palestinian political process, and were...

“...complementary to the restructuring of the Palestinian society from a society based on political struggle and the struggle to get rid of the occupation to the community helps in rearranging the region in general. I think that in many institutions whether in good a faith or bad faith, indulged in this (process), which were done by donors to the point that this process has less social impact and limited political influence, but highlights the economic role. They began to call it the second sector, but avoided reference to the dimension of mass action in the Palestinian society... (Participant 20, personal communication, September 14, 2009).

Remarkable contradictions within these NGOs were noticeable. These contradictions were between their contending aims (grassroots development versus political mobilization) and within their leadership. Such an unequal power relationship contributes to the internal contradictions within these NGOs of merging national activity against the Israeli occupation and trying to secure funding which assures the influence of specific donors within the region.

### *Acquiescences*

The donor-NGO relationship necessarily creates a tension with the political orientation of the institution. Despite the best intentions of the practitioners and the designated partisan, ideological and grassroots alignment of the NGO, the donor relationship has the capacity to shift the outcomes; in the Palestinian context, the outcome is a more professional and less grassroots-oriented NGO. This chapter critically assesses how donors influence the functions and features of these NGOs. The NGOs then objectively situate themselves within the donor’s designated

projects which are then reinforced by *acquiescences* notable in the discourse of these NGOs (PARC and UAWC).

John Gaventa's (1982) book, "Power and Powerlessness" addressed what he identified as three dimensions of power through a sociological analysis of Appalachian mining communities. Gaventa noted that power emanated itself in multiple dimensions in order to maintain dominant social structures through explicit and subtle means, but means that were reinforced not only by the status quo, but also those who were negatively impacted by these structures. The first dimension pertains to the formal arena where power is negotiated in what at least seems like a democratic approach, namely the public electoral realm of politics; this process can be usurped for the interests of a select few. Gaventa's second dimension of power addresses mechanisms which maintain power structures through explicit means, such as violence, which were complementary to the central struggle yet a relative "non-issue" compared to the broader grievances which brought about the political tension. The third dimension is one of acquiescence by those controlled or influenced by the power structure.

With respect to the NGOs of Palestine, these acquiescences are in a sense a subtle, non-explicit obedience to the desires of the donor organizations, as opposed to a vocal debate rife with healthy tension intended to stimulate social change. I identify six particular acquiescences that are defined below and discussed more thoroughly in the sections that follow. First is depoliticization. The institutional logic of donors leads them into a "project" focus inappropriate to highly complex sociopolitical processes. This project focus shifts the attention of the NGO away from a long-term social struggle to one of moving from project-to-project at the whims of available donor-funded projects. Second is the neoliberal institutionalization of NGOs around donor priorities and requirements (increased procedural overhead, planning, reporting,

evaluation, etc.). In turn, recipients (NGOs) have learned to be instrumentalized (into technocratic institutions) by and at the behest of the donors, orienting NGOs into professional NGOs as opposed to mass popular organizations accountable to their base. Third, this leads these NGOs to consider themselves as professionalized, ultimately contributing to the creation of contradictions in their self-perception as merely an NGO minus the grassroots emphasis.

Fourth, donors are claims to neutrality, for what is in fact a highly perspective, normative, and ultimately political intervention around a Western neoliberal agenda of capitalist modernization. The NGOs, while founded on the goals of service provision to build a leftist movement, transitioned to technocratic operations. This leads to a shift already under way from acting as radically identified social movements to non-ideological NGOs disconnected from their social change ideology, connected instead to discourses that are more narrowly defined in terms of development; in this instance, the question of “Development for whom?” would be steered toward the neoliberal interests of the donor.

Fifth is the acquiescence of fostering of vertical donor-recipient relationships that depend on funding to the detriment of horizontal relationships among civil society organizations that directly contribute to further fragmentation and competition. Sixth and finally there is the impact of the contradictions and competition among donors and the resulting confusion among grassroots NGOs, creating approaches that ignore the underlying conflicts and power inequalities embedded within the social system.

These six acquiescences will be reflected in the following four sections. These sections will examine the donor influence in the ideological orientation and operational outcomes of Palestinian NGOs. Note that these six acquiescences are interrelated, particularly the issues of depoliticization, professionalization and fragmentation from the political factions. Therefore, the

following sections are separated thematically, reflecting the interplay of these acquiescences within the four identified themes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how this process of donor instituted acquiescences impacts the capacity of Palestinian NGOs to significantly change the existing social structure and build civil society.

#### *Donor Creep: Institutional Depoliticization and Co-optation*

Donors are clearly an important input for NGOs, particularly Palestinian NGOs (PARC and UAWC) which rely heavily upon external funding for their activities. Alnoor (2005) pointed out other inputs that are difficult to quantify, such as technical advice from donors (provided directly by funder's staff or indirectly through consultants on the funding environment) and contacts with other members of the international development community or with various governmental officials. Brynen (2000, p. 229) concludes his study by saying "Without international assistance it is doubtful whether the Palestinian Authority- or the peace process- would have been around to see the day".

Roy (2001) isn't so amenable to the role of donor influence. Roy's critique is that political failure and economic decline were embedded in the Oslo process from the beginning and deepened over time by donor unwillingness to challenge Israeli policies (e.g., closure and other restrictive measures) - politically and economically - no matter how injurious to Palestinians or to the peace process. Donors tried to mitigate rather than challenge the damaging effects of Israeli policy in an effort to keep the so-called peace process alive. This brings the discourse of the NGOs into question, a discourse striving to maintain a neutral position on a national political question in the middle of an anti-colonial nationalist struggle, post-Oslo Accords. These NGOs (PARC and UAWC) made an active effort to take a political stance



regarding funding sources and with their established international allies. Their political perspective on a national cause guided them in any connection with these organizations.

We had different views of the global public institutions such as Oxfam aid and we started taking small amounts later in the year 1988 when the uprising began and the World Solidarity with the theme of the Intifada started. What makes our view different on these institutions at that time is the story of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the story of supporting the Intifada and the stone and thus build confidence between us and them, and became our allies and our colleagues... (Participant 07, personal communication, August 26, 2009).

Hanafi and Tabar (2005) pointed to a number of processes and the overall transformation of Palestinian NGOs that have occurred since the early 1990s, concomitant with their entry into the aid industry. Donors' "peace building" initiatives connected to the Oslo process and Palestinian state building created a new paradigm for Palestinian NGOs and civic institutions. *The international donor community provided new opportunities for NGO funding connected to building the presumed social and physical infrastructure for the emergent Palestinian state.* This new paradigm has also been accompanied with the disconnection of these NGOs from their political factions. Therefore, their de-linkage with the political discourse has guided their establishment and their political perspective.

Palestinian NGOs were very political before the Oslo Accords, making their ideological and political orientations clear in their interactions with funders. One NGO practitioners said as much: "Frankly I can say they were with leftist political perspectives, part of them belonging to the Communist Party of Italy, and others belonging to the socialist party in Canada" (Participant 04, personal communication, September 14, 2009). Therefore their views pushed them to take a clear stand against US funds.

So we, of course, were dealing with Arab and European institutions and refused to deal with American institutions because they claimed clearly that their assistance is to improve the conditions of Palestinians under occupation. We did not open any relationship with the Americans up to the peace conference, which came after the Madrid

Conference and the recognition of the PLO and the rights of the Palestinian people. This has come after a change in their mentality and approach that we talked about. But before this period, we rejected and refused to deal with the Americans until the first meeting with them ... (Participant 01, personal communication, September 14, 2009).

After the first Gulf War and the imposition of sanctions on Iraq in 1992 a renewed US strategy of global hegemony was set into motion in the Middle East (Walker, 2005). As a result, Western governmental and nongovernmental aid agencies, development organizations and the World Bank in the region specifically targeted Palestine because of the strong political connections to social struggle and statehood: remove the ideological component, and thus weaken the threat to Western neoliberal reform. At this time Palestine had a well-developed set of professional NGOs (PARC and UAWC) that were highly politicized, functioning together as a parastatal entity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) for the previous 30 years. Two years into Oslo, the large international funding agencies shifted their aid packages towards “development assistance programs” and specifically targeted non-political and professional NGOs (Hammami, 1995) that were more focused on advocacy, human rights monitoring, capacity building, and civil initiatives rather than grassroots political organizing.

The international aid industry (governmental aid for the most part) was instrumental in moving the Palestinian social movement away from one of resisting occupation to one of peace building. Governmental and multilateral organizations are the most important donors for Palestinian NGOs, in terms of funding made available annually and their massive presence with the start of Oslo peace process. All governmental representatives’ offices were established after the signing of the Declaration of Principles, but half of them were already providing aid since the mid-1980s (in the case of the Italian, Swedish, Austrian, and Swiss development agencies) (Challand, 2009). These funding organizations are associated organically with their government agendas and political interests in the country, which are determined by the amount of funding, as

well as institutions that have long-term agendas to reshape the Palestinian society. These organizations include either representative offices that have direct responsibilities over development activities (Dutch, Austrian, Italian, and Irish governments) or specialized development agencies active on the field (as is the case for the British DFID, Swedish SIDA, Canadian CIDA, Swiss SDC, Australian Aid, USAID, and the Norwegian NORAD). One NGO's director added:

I think there are many different funding organizations. Solidarity organizations deal with Palestinian people as part of solidarity. Thus funding is a means of solidarity (Swedish, Danish and Norwegian). They concentrate on resisting Israeli settlements and therefore their programs focus on land reclamation and farmers organizing. These organizations become limited due to their limited funds... (Participant 20, personal communication, June 20, 2008).

Many observers have expressed similar reservations about the massive aid given after 1994 to buttress the acceptance by Palestinians of Oslo agreements, despite the serious problems and biases on the road to the promised peace (Hanafi & Tabar, 2003; Lasensky, 2004).

US assistance was tied to nurturing Palestinian acceptance of a US “negotiated solution” and that the improvement of the Palestinian quality of life under occupation is nothing more than an acceptable camouflage for the imposition of US-initiated solutions... (Nakhleh, 1989, p. 119).

The impact of this shift in funding from supporting politicized, grassroots, professional, and community-based initiatives to the new super NGOs was dramatic (Walker, 2005). With this shift, the local reality – military occupation and repossession – were muted in the discourse. It also led many Palestinian grassroots NGOs (professional now) to shift their loyalties away from their organic political parties towards a political position that rested within the framework of neoliberal forms of nation-building and economic development (Walker, 2005). Ultimately this led these grassroots NGOs to an individual professional capacity of supporting nation-building

rather than grassroots collective strategies of development and resistance. A senior staff at one of these NGOs elaborated:

Here our role as an organization is to build these local committees so we can implement our projects in a very efficient and effective way to serve our communities. It's not our role to work on politics. It's the political party's responsibility ... (Participant 29, personal communication, Sept 02, 2009).

NGOs like PARC and UAWC, by accepting the myth of being non-political, contribute to the process of mystification, and therefore objectively side with the status quo, contrary to their expressed stand for social change. These organizations were pressured to do more service provision at the expense of community organizing. The service provision is then intended to be tied to a broader package of goods, namely the delivery of a social perspective/ideology, reflected in this quote:

We're working on lobbying and advocacy and on mass organizing, so we should work for organizing them politically and not for professional purposes. In my opinion, we should organize our mass politically on a political thought. After that, it's their choice if they want to raise chickens or dig wells or rehabilitate land. These are mechanisms, but the main objective should be political organizing and thus PARC become an organization with a political grassroots identity. It means all Farmers Union or the Women's Committee will affiliate with PARC not just to benefit and takes projects, but as to meet with them ideologically. They take projects to support their ideas and ideology... (Participant 06, personal communication, Sept 01, 2009).

Ironically, the depoliticized NGOs are involved in the process of so-called policymaking. They participate in or are made to feel that they participate in policymaking and policy dialogue among stakeholders. This has several implications. First, policymaking, an attribute of sovereignty for which the government of the day is supposedly accountable to its people, is wrenched from the state and vested in the amorphous coterie of "development partners" or stakeholders; everyone knows who the determining stakeholder really is. The old adage applies: "He who pays the piper calls the tune" (Shivji, 2007, p. 41).

In the Foucaultian sense, power is diffuse and it becomes much harder to identify the oppressive social structures since stakeholders feel as if they are given power (Beaulieu & Gabbard, 2006). The notion that NGOs really participate in policymaking is an illusion. In this day and age of donor-driven policies, this applies equally to the Palestinian Authority itself. It is presumptuous on the part of NGOs to pretend that they represent the people in the process of policymaking. Additionally, the whole process undermines the supposedly democratic and representative character of the state by actually granting greater authority to external actors.

NGOs were born in the womb of neoliberalism and knowingly or otherwise are participating in the imperial project (Shivji, 2007, p. 43). There is little doubt that there are well-intentioned, dedicated people in the NGOs, genuinely committed to the struggle for a better world. But there are serious debating spots and acquiescences in NGO participation in the donor's neoliberal projects rather than in the Palestinian national project. NGOs cannot be pro-people and pro-change without being against the "anti-people" aspects of neoliberalism (capitalist imperialism and the preservation of the status quo). NGOs must engage in critical discourse and political activism intended to alter oppressive social structures rather than assume false neutrality and non-partisanship. In the struggle between national liberation and neoliberal imperialist domination and between social emancipation and capitalist slavery (Shivji, 2007), NGOs must choose sides; in this choice between economic rationality and social emancipation, there is no in-between.

Another intellectual history has shaped "alternative" views of civil society, which informs the community of activists and NGOs' members criticizing the present form of neoliberal development. When these groups talk of civil society, they are thinking of their roles as agents in re-imagining what development is (Howell & Pearce, 2002) and what is taught to be

according to a distinct set of values. Translating the assumption that a strong civil society equals a strong democracy into aid programs begs the question, what kind of associations? Associations that aim to do what? An alternative set of ideas about civil society and democracy originates in a continental Western tradition. This other set of ideas emphasizes the dangers of assuming that civil and political equality can compensate for the social and economic inequalities generated by neoliberal market economies.

A cautionary approach against the de-politicization of civil society is of immense importance; de-politicization can arise all too readily through the technocratic process in development programs and projects. According to Shivji (2007), the different ideological appropriations of civil society, rendering it at once a concept used both to vindicate and challenge the supremacy of global capitalism (2007, p. 10). This will clarify how donor interventions in local civil society as a normative vision is contested, how donor interventions in local civil society reproduce relations of power between the North and the South, and how civil society itself is an arena within which power relations are worked out.

European NGOs, many of whom had long been involved in solidarity work and support for popular organizations in Palestine, played an important role in supporting Palestinian grassroots NGOs in the struggle for an equitable peace and just solution. The supportive sentiment of these European NGOs did not develop into a practical project for post-Oslo Palestine because of a number of inhibiting factors, which included theoretical confusions, the ambivalence of the left toward democracy, the conceptual tension between “community” and “civil society” and other factors which were expressed and reflected by many Latin American NGOs. Howell and Pearce (2002) mentioned determining factors, which are the fragmentation

and division of empirical civil society and the inability to steer a course that retained the popular utopian vision while remaining practical and effective.

Donor projects and civil society building programs were tailored to their assumptions about the problems of empirical civil society, to their prerequisites, and around their meanings of the concept. Essentially, the popular movement “leftist “ was ill-prepared philosophically to deal with the clear and strategic alternatives that would be offered after the Oslo accord was signed. Radical ideas did not disappear after the signing of Oslo Accords, but they became easily diluted in the encounter with donors, distancing from their affiliated political parties, and the need to engage with the political system to secure their existence. A profound skepticism existed among these grassroots NGOs about the affiliated political party as an instrument for change in Palestine, expressed by the rise of new Community Based Organizations (CBOs), local committees, and organizations as an alternative to the leftist popular committees.

#### *Institutional Integrity Vs Community Orientation*

NGOs were profoundly influenced by the development environment surrounding their emergence, in particular by trends in development that had become evident by early 1980s and by the experiences of other rural development organizations. One of these trends was the “professionalization” of NGOs.

The process of professionalization or institutionalization had begun after 1991. Many of these formerly popularly grassroots initiatives had become professionally based, foreign funded development centers which targeted clients as opposed to working with a constituency (Hammami, 1995). This transformation of the mass movement into an NGO community of mass-based, voluntary organizations into more elite, professional and politically autonomous institutions was a complex process. In this regard, it is foreign funding (the majority of it from

European nations funneled through their own domestically-based NGOs) that has played a significant role in the transformation of the Palestinian NGO community. A senior staff states:

There is no doubt that there is a dialectical relationship between funding and the internal institutional evolution, this means the ability of the organization to evolve and develop its own working methods and to develop itself as an institution. This helped to convince the funders to distribute funding in a more automated manner... (Participant 05, personal communication, September 1, 2009).

The professionalization of grassroots NGOs took place after Oslo Accords in 1993, on three fronts; the organization started to recruit and offer good salaries to agronomy “engineers”, agriculture scientists, public relations specialists, social workers, and managers from reputed academic organizations. An NGO, for example, would interact with its key international promoter to prepare reports and studies of high quality in order to secure funding from bilateral agencies. As a result, NGOs appeared from their very beginning not as small voluntary organizations on a shoestring budget, but as organizations with professional staff, governmental competition, and substantial foreign funds. This professionalization was in part motivated by increasing interactions with international funders which made it necessary for NGO staff to be sufficiently trained to manage substantial funding, reporting, and monitoring requirements; this bureaucratization added considerable overhead and distracted from the NGO’s transformative mission to one of managerialism. Indeed, the biggest risk for NGOs today may be that they will lose their ideology or their advocacy role and become entrepreneurs in a quasi-market environment in which they contract themselves out to the government (Smillie, 1995, p. 172). Thus, NGOs run the risk of functioning more like businesses than voluntary organizations.

It was also a time when one NGO, PARC, started to follow the international standard of the quality of services “ISO9002”. That required specific formats and MIS to acquire it, not as a need of the organization, but to create a professional reputation among the international funders,



so as to get more funds; in this sense, PARC began operating by standards crafted by Western donors, not organically from within Palestinian society.

Many factors, such as international funding, promoted another vision of how civil society should become institutionalized during the peace process, inhibiting the transition of a radical democratic idea of civil society into practical projects for post-Oslo Palestine. As one practitioner states, this has caused many NGOs to become technocratic and politically neutralized:

I think it's hard to say that the NGOs are grassroots organizations, nor that they contribute to state-building, or in only peace-building. They now try working in crisis management which has drowned them, and therefore they do not even have time to think about how to build the country. This means that it's rare to find institutions, which work to organize people for political reasons. They organize people on how to serve irrigation networks, to build farms, and how to participate in marketing on a purely professional framework. But there is no grassroots organizing that is led by these organizations to achieve a political objective... (Participant 20, personal communication, June 20, 2008).

“Even the institutions that work in land reclamation or against the settlements are trying to do it as part of a professional process, and therefore it became a national process. If there are no funds, then there is no mass action, although in previous periods, mass action creates mechanisms to finance itself by voluntary contributions and volunteering. Now we we're working as paid staff in the mass action...” (Participant 22, personal communication, September 2, 2009). Foreign organizations demanded certain levels of long-term planning, set activities and transparency linked to service provision as opposed to political mobilization. The civil society priorities were changed to meet the *neoliberal* logic of the extralocal donor organizations. A senior staff states:

Let's say the real recruitment stage started after 1987. We had an accountant and we had management. We did not have it before. We had a council who used to meet and decide the activities and then distribute the activities on a voluntary basis. We had our first assessment in the organization in 1990 and honestly Novib (a Dutch NGO) started with us in this year. Novib suggested we make an assessment and evaluation. This evaluation

helped us to know a lot of the common terminology in developmental institutions. We learnt the meaning of development, the meaning of the mission, what are the goals of the mission. They began to discuss that with us and they formulate these goals in *their* way based on our discussion... (Participant 04, personal communication, September 2, 2009).

The late 1980s and early 1990s were, a period of change and experimentation, as well as of expansion. Therefore a number of changes at this time were a direct result of linkages the NGOs and international funding organizations and the consequent integration of NGOs into global development discourses. New development ideas have been transmitted from international levels downwards to the NGOs through various forms of expertise and training, and organized evaluation visits and consultancies. While the structural nature of NGO-funder exchange is evident in processes of organizational learning, it shows also how funders have influenced learning by introducing NGOs to new ideas and technologies and yet have impeded learning through specific reporting and accountability systems. This is not surprising, since “double loop learning”<sup>5</sup> (Alnoor, 2005, p. 110) is rare in most organizations.

The period of expanding interactions with funders was however also a time of growing tension with their affiliated political parties especially in the case of PARC. Many organizations that were factionally affiliated began to create management boards, as well as to hire some staff from non-factional backgrounds. I argue therefore that there is a serious tension between donor objectives and the real sociopolitical world in which Palestinian social movements, organizations and NGOs operate. While the latter needs to enhance their effectiveness and ability to achieve goals, they also need to develop their own agenda and retain their social and political legitimacy.

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<sup>5</sup> Argyris and Schon (1996, p. 22) summarize the difference between these two levels of learning. Single loop learning is concerned primarily with effectiveness; how best to achieve existing goals and objectives, keeping organizational performance within the range by existing values and norms. However, the correction of error requires inquiry through which organizational values and norms themselves are modified, which is what is meant by double-loop learning

Grassroots NGOs lack the strategies related to gaining access to the decision making centers at the local level through their community-based organizations and farmers committees. It is not explicitly clear how grassroots NGOs are trying to influence the state in the public political sphere relative to the communal structures of the villages in rural areas. International donors of all kinds played a critical role in promoting this shift on issues of democracy and human rights and helped preserve fragile spaces for organizations among the population. Civil society actors were tasked with a serious challenge to the conditional funding and corrupt PA. This created contradictions between staff within these NGOs in identifying their organizations as professional organizations versus grassroots organizations. According to one NGO executive:

If we look at the set of rules and principles governing the work, the first thing is that, we are a professional organization specialized in agriculture and rural development. Basically, we have tried to ensure the quality of service as the basis of our work and we've tried since 1998. That's why our first strategic plan for our work is a model, and I think we were pioneers in that and we got the certificate of quality of services "ISO9002" and this was special. What was behind this trend is the quest to be a professional organization concerned with the quality of work... (Participant 10, personal communication, December 02, 2009).

This then reorients NGOs toward a professional perspective, gearing operations toward measurable outcomes. Grassroots NGOs ended up with a perspective that formal bureaucratic procedures of accounting and reporting mattered more than the quality and the nature of services oriented toward creating community change.

... mass action and organizing has been canceled completely and therefore the focus is only on the professional and technical work, in addition to the integration of civil society organizations agendas with the government agenda. In doing so, NGOs have to prove that they cooperate with government and have no contradictions in their agendas. Thus funders started to promote and force NGOs to having coordination committees between them and governmental organizations through the quality and quantity of funding and sometimes promote the private sector as a partner too through what they called public- private- NGOs partnership. ... (Participant 13, personal communication, June 15, 2008).

There are two successive formative moments for NGOs using explicitly the concept of civil society from the mid-1990s (Challand, 2009). When NGOs that were providing services (in health, agriculture, education, and the like) were also serving political purposes (since parties were forbidden under Israeli occupation), they portrayed themselves as popular movements resisting colonial occupation. Then NGOs later portrayed themselves as popular-based movements endowed with strong legitimacy resisting the Israeli occupation and the autocratic tendencies of Palestinian National Authority (PNA). So by their connection to this new international rhetoric of democracy from below associated with civil society, NGOs expressed their new particular political position. It is argued that the connection (Challand, 2009) to the rhetoric of civil society reveals the increasing impact of external aid upon local NGOs. Donors also reinforce the partnership between NGOs and PA to strengthen both the capacity of PA in providing services and internal democratic principles. It is actually pursuing another goal, that of the success of the peace process (Kanaan, 2002). A program officer states:

...therefore the framework for these NGOs is non-political and is to provide services rather than providing vision and policies. Now you can hardly find any organization which can claim that it has its own agenda, or outside the funder's government agenda or that even differs from funders' agenda... (Participant 11, personal communication, November 23, 2009).

#### *Non-ideological or Compromising Ideology*

The progressive components of the radical, populist, people-driven nationalists of Palestinian grassroots NGOs loyal to their leftist organic political parties is now in many ways co-opted by donors. The international aid industry (mostly governmental) was instrumental in shifting NGO loyalty from their political parties, thus, keeping them away from their organic leftist ideology. These grassroots NGOs became donor funded and dependent, seeking donor funds through customary procedures set by the funding agencies. Another nail in the proverbial

coffin was the PA's implementation of a regulatory regime requiring registration, and resulted in institutionalizing the professionalized features of NGOs, previously foisted upon them by the donor community. This NGO registration system now allowed the PA to exercise more authority and influence over NGOs.

In my opinion, sources of funding affect the structure of any organization, but there is a subjective factor; namely the extent of the organization's leadership to lead the institution to take into account feature development in the enterprise while retaining the essence of a progressive institution and to keep the structure more equitable. These two approaches were always present together. You can find part of the managers who only concern themselves about their situation all the time, while the other part was more attentive to the staff in the field and of course this was reflected in the minutes of meetings and in the meetings discussions. I remember that was apparent at that time so it led to the situation in which, the administrators were attributing all good achievements to them in the headquarter and everything is bad for the staff in the field despite the fact that people in the field are the ones who give the institution the status of being grassroots NGO (Participant 06, personal communication, September 01, 2009).

Another factor that led to this shift is the type of leadership in these NGOs. This leadership has to be able to handle internal changes in order to avoid any contradictions between maintaining these NGOs as grassroots and the institutionalization process within. This process had maintained the national priorities and agenda of the institution as a progressive organization. One NGO staffer notes the process which occurs when leaders do not lead based upon core values and ideology... "The foundation was established at the beginning as a carrier of the Communist ideology, thought that biased to the poor marginalized groups, social justice values - that is leftist ideology"... (Participant 05, personal communication, September 01, 2009).

We focused on the thought of secularism and progressive aspects in the institution of which we lost now. We were excelling in that and that's what made our organization unique and successful at that time. These values disappeared, because they distanced themselves completely from anything that has to do with the process of passing the secular and ideological dimension of the masses. There has been a way for the entire ideological and intellectual issues with target groups- which I mean here is that there has been a humanitarian community standards rather than political, and thus the ideological awareness process disappeared completely, and volunteering in the organization's thought became less... (Participant 06, personal communication, September 01, 2009).

This creates heterogenic NGOs, comprised of actors with conflicting ideologies from leftists to rightists, muddling the institutional ideology. The NGO staff appears to fall into three categories. In the first category, there are many radical elitist “holdovers” who were previously involved in past political struggles, who have an explicit vision for change, and who were responsible for the founding of these NGOs in a terrain of struggle for transformation. In the second category are mainstream professional elitists whose source of motivation is career and salary-driven. The third category is well-intended individuals morally driven by altruistic motives to improve the conditions of their fellow human beings. An administrative staffer notes this dynamism:

After the distancing between institutions from the political party, the party and the field staff were no longer responsible for passing the progressive thoughts and ideological vision to the most vulnerable people in the communities. Thus this weakened the organization vision. But there still remained comrades inherent in this ideology but as individuals, and they do not represent organization method of organizing people... (Participant 05, personal communication, September 01, 2009).

Rather than a clear ideology in these grassroots NGOs, they are often left with a vague mission statement, one that is amorphous and meaningless, or as Shivji (2007, p. 33) said "the so-called strategic plans and log-frames which can be tabulated, quantified and ticked for triennium reports and proposals for more funding." A director at the NGOs states:

This process culminated in the formulation of a mission statement for the first time that clear core values - the values of civil society in accounting for transparency in values, non-discrimination in service, regardless of gender or religion or affiliation to any political party whatsoever, and that these values are to side with the poor and with the marginalized intellectually. These are our core values, but I cannot say something about them; the statement might be stemming from the ideology of the founders, but it certainly does not constitute, in any way, ideology... (Participant 10, personal communication, December 02, 2009).

These grassroots NGOs, which according to their public statements stand for change, accept the ideological myth that they are third sector or outside of the market and state dichotomies:

depoliticized, non-partisan, non-grassroots, professionals who have nothing to do with power or production.

External donors were successful in shifting these grassroots NGOs identity from being part of the voluntary “popular movement” to the civil society sector, which changed the staff and the job requirements at the expense of community organizing requirements. A general director at one of these grassroots NGOs states:

Of course, funders have their own agendas in the general framework. An agenda that, regardless of external funding or other relief aids, whether they are friends, or not, that moves the general framework under the rules of international economic order based on the free market, based on the empowerment of the private sector based on an uncontrolled open system and this in itself is globalization. So the practice of public agenda of the external funding is one of the tools to promote -let me say- this trend... (Participant 23, personal communication, October 07, 2009).

Divisions within these grassroots organizations were created by donors in an attempt to promote professionalization and to depoliticize these NGOs, resulting in different perspectives about the set of principles that guide the work of these NGOs. Their perceptions range from considering themselves to be leftist NGOs to non-ideological professional NGOs.

I do not think that there is development towards an ideology not only in civil society sector formation in Palestine but in the world, and its nature of work. You see that they are all established by political parties, and later because of the nature of things and because of working on public wealth, they have to be unbiased to any party, so to any ideology. It is unacceptable to be biased to any ideology when you are working with the public’s money... (Participant 03, personal communication, October 11, 2009).

Donors had to accept and work within the process of political struggle and debate, but not to shape those encounters and accommodate “projects,” or divide the beneficiaries further through selective funding. Different donors, have different understandings of civil society due to being affiliated with different departments in their home countries. This in return creates confusion within the NGOs as they are tasked to adapt to the unique vision of each donor, a vision that the donor may not have even communicated properly.

If we take the set of rules and criteria governing the work of our organization, the first thing, we consider our organization as a professional one, specialized in agriculture and rural development. From the beginning, we tried to offer a quality of service; our first strategic plan for the working methodology was in 1998, and I think at that time we were pioneers were way ahead of any other community organization. In 1998 and 1999 we got the quality certificate of ISO9002 and that was distinctive and what was behind this approach was to seek to be an institution concerned with the quality of work... (Participant 10, personal communication, December 02, 2009).

These grassroots NGOs lacked a clear ideology and thus a clear project of their own.

Their own roots among the poorest population needed to be broadened. External donor funding encourages them to focus on implementing projects, competing with the state on delivering services, rather than deepening their connections with their own grassroots. Ultimately, through this process, some of the political perspectives and dynamism of the past diminished.

Developing professional and technical expertise to deal with the social and economic problems of the region creates a clash between the role of service provision and the policy advocacy approach, therefore weakening the NGO's role to formulate local level collective action and political perspectives. The concern is that the state may seek to derive benefits from the role of NGOs as service providers, while trying to exclude them from gaining influence in other spheres, namely the political (Bratton, 1989); this no doubt preserves the status quo, falling short of challenging the existing power structures. Indeed, the biggest risk for NGOs today may be that they will lose their ideological foundations or their advocacy role, becoming neutered entrepreneurs nested within a quasi-market environment, serving as mere government contractors (Smillie, 1995, p. 172); they are then relegated to being a cog in the machine as opposed to the monkey wrench that dismantles it. Thus, NGOs run the risk of functioning more like neoliberal market institutions than emancipatory organizations.

While many politically-engaged NGO staffers have made efforts in sustaining their progressive ideology to maximize structural impacts adhering to their respective organization's



mandates, the technical minded colleagues have made it increasingly difficult by encouraging donor intervention through various donor-driven project implementations. Many of these projects significantly contribute to the diminishing political dynamism of grassroots activism, institutionalizing it in ways that bring greater impartiality and a neutral stance at the expense of building representative and legitimate opposition in tune with the needs of the country's poor majority.

### *Non-Partisan: Dancing with Political Affiliation*

By identifying a distinct sphere of social interaction, grassroots NGOs raised the issue of autonomy, not just from the state "PA", but also from their affiliated political parties. Donors encounter certain dilemmas and contradictions that call for a rethinking of strategy and purpose.

A senior staff stresses on that saying:

Thus gradually, funding was working directly to push us towards the enhancement of the status of the private sector and a general framework under the rules of the international economic order based on the free market, as well as the direction of building networks and relationships in line with the private sector, networks of alliances and intersections designed to make common understanding between you and them and this of course at the expense of the institution vision. These applications are inspired by the public agenda of donors. This is also the initial impact on the relationship with the political party and narrows levels more and more, and consequently, creating a relationship between the political party and the institution in a state of more confusion and more erratic. There were recent attempts to develop a program or a strategic document to emphasize the institution's visions... (Participant 17, personal communication, September 13, 2009).

Donor interventions in civil society creates its own politics- a battlefield of contending norms, values, and visions of how social, economic, and political life should be organized around the respective roles of the individual, collective, and state therein (Pearce, 1997). There is a politics of choice that leads to insiders and outsiders, the included and the excluded; there is a politics of partnership that reinforces particular visions and norms and underplays the conflicting elements of relations within civil society and civil society's state, and market actors. Ultimately,

this creates gradual adaptation of the organizations through funding towards the development agendas to serve the donors' political visions.

I mean here, is that some donors and major partners tell us that they agree with the reclamation of land, but prohibited it in the areas of C. So you'll recognize these divisions in this way and not the Palestinian people as a one geographic unit. If we are to protect the development, this means land reclamation and cultivation of crops in only one blank area in the C areas. Talking about the subject of water, the Americans push us towards the waste-water. Well, we the Palestinians are facing the shortage of water problem, but the main problem is not lack of water, but the unfair distribution of water and lack of control over water. Donors are calling us to become preoccupied by sewage and recycling water instead of our water rights... (Participant 02, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

Civil society does not lend itself to external manufacturing. It cannot be created via blueprints from officers in Washington or London (Walker, 2005). Civil societies, in any context, have a history and must develop in tune with their particular historical, cultural, and political rhythms. Underlying the politics of universality, partnership, and the choice are differential power relations, whereby donor agencies, with their financial, human, and knowledge resources, inevitably dominate interactions with fund recipients. This in turn makes civil society organizations, that are supposed to be "independent," sacrifice their autonomy to varying degrees through their reliance on donor funding that comes with strings attached.

This is reflected in (1) competition among local NGOs, for funding at the expense of seeking coalitional strategies and alliances; (2) reification of "the project" and "the NGO" rather than a concerted strategy to overcome commonly identified problems and; (3), the adoption of donor priorities in an effort to sustain activity and ultimately the existence of the organization. Without careful and sensitive prior analysis of needs and the social and political context, donor intervention into local civil society can end up distorting and weakening local processes of associations and problem resolution (Alnoor, 2005, p. 121).

Van Roy (1998, p. 204) points to some of errors made by donors in strengthening civil society. One of these concerns is the simple assumptions made about the relationship between civil society, free markets, and democracy. Van Roy (1998, p. 207) observes that donors can contribute best to social change when they build on pre-existing processes. In this sense, the practitioner is leveraging already existing community assets and reducing overall effort by utilizing processes in action as opposed to starting from scratch. Furthermore, this bolsters the organic aspects of the localized civil society, creating more buy-in from stakeholders, as opposed to introducing some “unknown,” foreign approach which syncs poorly with local community members.

The donor approach also contributes to the division within these grassroots NGOs and the contradictions in their perspectives regarding the relation these grassroots NGOs should have with their political fractions’ roots. Many of these grassroots cadres or staff still believe and see the importance of keeping these NGOs connected to their organic political parties, so they will be well connected to the Palestinian socio-political and economic context and ultimately strengthen the grassroots movement facing the Israeli colonial forces. “I can tell you, that strong grassroots organizations cannot be established without strong political parties with a clear identity. It’s impossible. Therefore, there is an organic link between them” (Participant 14, personal communication, July 20, 2008).

While many staff members of these grassroots organizations and most importantly, those who hold high and important positions have extremely different perspectives on the linkage with the political parties, some of them argue that it is very safe and indeed healthy for the future of these grassroots NGOs to stay away from their organic political parties. Some would argue that their acceptance of shifting these organizations into neutral organizations were mainly for

funding purposes and so to meet the donors criteria of moving away from the political position that guide their development vision. An executive director stresses that saying:

I personally think that staff should not be deeply affiliated with political parties. I can see these people with limited vision as they are holding one political party interest and they could not see other political parties and other stakeholders. Therefore, they will not be able to achieve the institution's mission... (Participant 03, personal communication, October 11, 2009).

It is important to highlight the vital role of NGOs as crucial social actors on the Palestinian scene, but historically as subordinate to political parties. The latter, under the umbrella of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), were concentrating on organizing civil society politically in the form of mass movement and institutionalized NGOs. Many authors (Muslih, 1993) point to these NGOs as the backbone of Palestinian civil society. Therefore it is correct to insist on a clear leftist agenda and vibrant affiliation to their political parties, in order to achieve the political ends. A director at one of these grassroots NGOs addresses this:

I think that this was a valid opinion, to distance the institution itself and move away a little from the inner life of the political party. As the organization is dealing with public money, then it should be away from the politics by law. Yes, we were asked by more than three sides and not including the political party. We are asked by the General Assembly, and we provide our report to the Board of Directors, which in turn would report to the General Assembly, the public and this is the local administration of the institution and therefore we do not provide reports to a formal political party. We are accountable to funders. We are implementing projects provided by our funders and therefore we are asked of what we do with the money through their means of financiers by external auditors. We also offer reports to the Board of Directors Ministry of the Interior who officially registered our organization in 1996. Thus legally, the political party no longer has formal influence... (Participant 10, personal communication, December 02, 2009).

### *Conclusion*

An open, critical discussion and debate amongst Palestinian NGOs about the role the international aid and development community has played in Palestine is of vital importance. This discussion has been raised because the NGO sector is where much of the Palestinian secular, left-leaning, national, and democratic forces reside. The disengagement of such a large, diverse

group is problematic in that multiple viewpoints are crowded out and innovation of policy and public choice are left to an increasingly smaller group. It is from here where support and protection for the Palestinian grassroots struggle against Israeli colonial actions must come.

It is very important to see how the rise, role and features of these grassroots NGOs, which situate themselves within the funder's agendas and the aid industry's influence, are reinforced by certain "acquiescences" in NGO discourse. It must be noted that grassroots NGOs are going to great lengths to demonstrate their political neutrality. In 2003, several major grassroots NGOs took a major political stand and refused to accept USAID funding due to agency's new regulations that all organizations accepting funding must sign a waiver "anti-terrorist certificate" promising not to use the money to fund "terrorist or suspected terrorists projects." Despite this, these organizations exhibit more and more internal politicization and debate in their alliance building, an atomization of power and charismatic authority (Walker, 2005), especially during political crises.

It's true that the Oslo Accords have played a fundamental role in shifting the role of these left-leaning NGOs, and succeeded in detaching them from their organic political parties (themselves, ill-prepared to face this prolonged period of regulation restructuring). But it is of immense importance for these NGOs to build a strong alliance to advocate for a movement, reorienting their foci back to their core ideological imperatives; such a movement would reconsider the voluntary popular committees at local level. With that said, these grassroots NGOs must take a clear political stand that rests within supporting this movement through their programs and projects with a clear ideology and message that have to promote the progressive agenda of standing for the poorest of the poor, social justice programs and clear political stand to achieve a political end.

It is with no doubt that these grassroots NGOs shouldn't serve one target, which is affiliated to certain political party as they claim, but of great importance to concentrate on issues and projects that are politically connected to the reality of the majority of Palestinians – they must have their eye on changing the social structure itself. The Palestinian colonial context has to be acknowledged and clearly understood, then correctly described so as to conduct a conscious, organized and sustained struggle against it, but not merely through actions serving the objectives of singular projects and programs. The requirements of funding agencies subtly discourage, if not exhibit, outright hostility to a historical, social, and theoretical understanding of development, poverty, and gender issues, that now tell them: *just act, don't think; and we shall fund both* (Shivji, 2007).

Shivji (2007, p. 37) argues that many mainstream NGO leaders have internalized assumptions and functions relative to neo-conservatism, convinced that globalized neoliberalism is inevitable and irreversible. Thus they have joined its implications ironically without much critical analysis of what “it” actually is or means. And that's how Palestinian left-leaning NGOs followed the requirements of funders since they started to be funded to be institutionalized and go through this persistent restructuring without calculating the cost and effects of losing their populist-oriented base for the sake of funding.

NGOs need to ask: What are the biophysical (political, social, moral, ideological, economic, and cultural) mechanisms which produce, reinforce, and make a sovereign Palestinian society that would be based on social justice and equality, not only possible, but seemingly acceptable? The progressive agenda of people-driven development, the radical populist agenda of the nationalists of these grassroots NGOs leaders of previous times – is co-opted as it now stands. To change the current political situation for the better, challenging all forms of

oppression, whether the Israeli colonial project or the patriarchal structures is required, would allow individuals the fundamental right to interact, a basic building block of community.

In the struggle between national liberation and community domination by the connected economic elites, and between social emancipation and capitalists' funding domination, NGOs have to choose sides. In this there is no in-between. NGOs by accepting the myth of being non-political and non-ideological, contribute to the process of puzzlement, and thus objectively side with the status quo, contrary to their expressed stand for change. Palestinian grassroots NGOs must recover their sovereignty and self-determination: their right to think genuinely for themselves. Thus, there is a need to integrate intellectual and activist discourse, so NGOs truly play the role of catalysts of change rather than catechist of aid and charity. And if NGOs are to play that role, they must fundamentally re-examine their acquiescences and discourses to resist capture by the aid industry.

No doubt that there are gracious motivations and good intentions of NGO leaders and activists who are working hard to make their communities better. The outcome though is not reflecting these intentions. Therefore we have to reflect on ourselves as civil society activists; a clear purpose is essential. The relationship between NGOs and masses did not develop as, nor have managed to become organic (Shivji, 2007). Therefore it remains, at best, that of benefactors and beneficiaries and thus this is not the best of relationships when it comes to genuine activism, rather than, for people. NGOs' accountability therefore is limited to a small group of people who for most part are more accountable to their donor base than to their communities; the donor base sets the agenda, assigns limitations, and reorients these organizations. NGOs spend little time defining the real vision of the overall social, economic context of our societies, other than in the project background for the sake of funding. In spite of the limitations on NGO activities shown

in this chapter, the material also illustrates that these grassroots NGOs make many positive contributions through their programs and projects and build on the resilience of the Palestinian people.



## CHAPTER FIVE: GRASSROOTS NGOS PRACTITIONERS: A CROSS SECTION OF PROFESSIONALISM AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

### *Introduction*

Grassroots NGOs play an important role empowering communities through different projects, programs and community services. Practitioners at these organizations take on many roles to promote their organizations' visions of community empowerment. Practitioners' roles range from community building, community organizing, implementing projects (service intervention) to advocacy. This chapter analyzes how practitioners work with communities pursuing community progressive change. What guides them in their practices with local communities? How do they define the social change and community leadership as an impact of their projects? How do practitioners conceptualize the progressive community change at community level through different activities and projects? And finally, in what capacity do practitioners conduct their community work? The second section in this chapter examines grassroots NGOs interpretation and understanding of social change process, particularly on a micro level – community level. This will be analyzed at three distinct levels; the organizational level through policies, vision, mission and strategies; practitioners' personal definition of social change through their community practices; and at the community level, where community members entertain ideas, notions, and images about social change.

The analysis of this chapter draws on interviews with practitioners who are working with PARC and UAWC in different projects and programs in West Bank. I interview 18 (eight females and ten males) practitioners from both PARC and UAWC, who are working in different districts (Hebron, Jenin, Tulkarim, Beithlehem, and Ramallah). It also draws from documents such as strategic plans, action plans and project's documents. My participant observation at the sites gave me important insights into practitioners' roles. It also stems from my preliminary

interviews that were conducted with practitioners on summer 2008. My experience working and consulting with these organizations provided me with additional depth and insight. This analysis also draws on interviews with community members. I interviewed twenty (eight females and twelve males) practitioners from both PARC and UAWC, working in different districts (Hebron, Jenin, Tulkarim, Beithlehem, and Ramallah). I interviewed 18 (eight females and ten males) practitioners from both PARC and UAWC who are active members at four community-based organizations (women's club, women's cooperative, male farmers' cooperative, and male farmer committee at four different communities in both the south and the north of West Bank). This chapter will give insight into practitioners' roles at Palestinian Grassroots NGOs. First the chapter provides a background about practitioners working at PARC and UAWC. Next, it addresses practitioners' roles in community development through aspects such as empowerment. Then it proceeds to discuss the implications of these aspects through practitioners' practices with Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The chapter then addresses values that guide practitioners in their community work, followed by the discussion of how Grassroots NGOs build their capacities to conduct their roles. Next, the chapter addresses the practitioners' conceptualization of local leadership and allies in order to give an insight about their orientation as activists and professionals. The following section covers community change as an impact of practitioners' community work based on community members at women's and farmers CBOs. Finally, the conclusions section draws some overall lessons about practitioners and progressive community change.

#### *Background About Practitioners at PARC and UAWC*

Urban-based professional agronomists and engineers initiated wide-spread contact with thousands of farmers during the 1980s in an effort to both improve a declining agriculture sector

and to encourage Palestinian self-sufficiency (Christenson & Robinson, 1980). The hope was to diminish agricultural dependency on Israel and thereby to enhance national disengagement from an occupying power. UAWC was established in 1986, while PARC was established in 1983 in response to the vulnerable socio-political circumstance of farmers that resulted from Israeli occupation policies of land and water confiscation, policies that directly harmed the interests of farmers and Palestinians as a whole.

A number of agricultural engineers in Jericho, motivated by a desire to break the downward spiral of diminishing Palestinian agricultural production --and indirectly by ideological and class concerns-- began to conduct gratis extension visits to small farmers in Jordan Valley in 1983 (Participant 16, personal communication, June, 2008). A year later this small program was broadened and formalized into the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC) and was loosely affiliated with the Palestine Communist Party. The overall strategy was (and is) to promote the formation and consolidation of local farmers' committees through which to promote various aspects of self-help and agricultural and development (Christenson & Robinson, 1980). By the end of 1984, PARC had 60 volunteers working regularly throughout the West Bank offering technical advice (Participant 01, personal communication, 2009). By 1985, PARC had expanded its agenda beyond technical advising, and emphasized the expansion of local agriculture organizations. In 1989, PARC engineers worked with 60 popular committees in 122 villages throughout the occupied territories. By the beginning of 1990, PARC employed 45 engineers in WBGS in addition to having a wide network of volunteers and working with dozens of local committees (Participant 30, personal communication, 2009).

As of 2009 there were 123 employees working in PARC in WBGS, 40 females and 83 males (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 2009). They were working on administrative jobs and field work projects as practitioners in different districts in WBGS. Eighty-six (86) employees were working as practitioners on implementing projects, extension, lobbying and advocacy as well as in capacity building programs (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 2009). Practitioners or extension workers were responsible to carry out the planned activities according to the time table and allocated resources. During the last 25 years, PARC's workers gained experience in addition to their high technical qualifications and became well known to local communities. Thirty females are primarily working as practitioners in different projects and programs such as: credit and savings program with women; implementing projects in food security; lobbying and advocacy; and in extension. Fifty-six male practitioners do similar jobs targeting farmers and women in rural communities.

Geographically PARC has six total offices. There are two head offices; one in Ramallah and another in Gaza. Of PARC's four branch offices, three are in WB and one is in GS. The first one is located in North part of WB in Jenin and it covers: Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus, Tubas and Qalqiliya governorates. The second is located in Middle part of WB in Ramallah and it covers Ramallah, Jerusalem, Jericho and Salfeet governorates. The third one is located in Southern part of WB in Hebron and it covers Hebron and Bethlehem. The last one is located in Gaza Strip, covering the entire strip. All these offices are generally well-equipped, and the organization implements programs based on the tools and equipment available at the time.

While PARC was the first and largest agricultural relief committee, it did not long stay the only one. Agronomists loosely affiliated with Popular Front of Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) also established a similar organization, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees

(UAWC), in 1986. From 1988-1989, UAWC claims to have established and worked with 84 local agricultural popular committees, with a total membership of 3000, in addition to founding 45 cooperatives (Participant 23, personal communication, December 02, 2009).

In 1991 the UAWC received its first funding and hired three full time employees, two part time employees, in addition to 15 existing volunteers (Participant 22, personal communication, 2009). From 1993 to 1997, the Union advanced projects and programs and its working staff members; thus, the number of staff increased to 13 male and female employees in the WB and 20 in the GS (Union of Agriculture Working Committees, 2008). The Union's activities focused this time on land reclamation, agricultural extension, marketing and implementing projects to create job opportunities in the agriculture sector.

From 1997-2000 the UAWC developed its organizational structure and built funding relations and partnerships, with services reaching new villages and communities. At the end of this period, the Union consisted of 29 male and female employees in the WB and 23 in GS (Participant 22, personal communication, 2009). The time since the most recent Intifada (2000-2007) has seen the deterioration of the economic circumstances of the majority of Palestinians, particularly farmers. With that, the nature of the Union's programs changed as emergency projects became the bulk of its work. The Union thus worked during this period on projects to create job opportunities and distribute production inputs to farmers, support house gardens, cottage industries, and the provision of drinking water resources for farmers and countryside inhabitants, in addition to programs of aid distribution, and work for food. At present there are 54 employees in the UAWC (30 in the GS and 24 in the WB). There are also many employees who are temporarily working on projects. The total number of practitioners are 22 (5 females) and (15 males) in West Bank (Union of Agriculture Working Committees, 2008).

### *An Overview: Practitioners' Roles in Community Development*

Progressively-oriented, left-leaning organizations such as PARC and UAWC often seek to improve the situation of marginalized people through changing the unjust settings, traditionally conservative culture, negative stereotypes, and institutional barriers hindering human development. Facilitating the enfranchisement of the most marginalized in rural communities into the structure of the community based organization, or community committees can create an avenue and environment that does not replicate some of the negative, hierarchical practices of local governance it is organizing against. The idea that the means and the ends of organizing are related offers a powerful and transformative direction for organizers. Transformation of values and institutions is fundamental to frame consciousness-raising, so community members envision and work for communities in which they want to live. Changing policies, improving programs, and enhancing economic access for disenfranchised communities represents reform work which is indeed an important part of progressive social change. Transforming political and social structures is also as important, if not more so; the concern is that many NGOs are avoiding this necessary task of socio-structural change.

A Chicago based community organizer once said that one should never do things for people that they can do for themselves (Alinsky, 1971). This is an interesting notion, particularly when considered by practitioners whose tasks may be to provide social services to people who are living in poverty, crisis and marginalized areas. A key feature of what makes community organizing distinct from other types of interventions is that it consists of helping people help themselves. That community organizer, Saul Alinsky, also agreed that they have to re-claim power in order to make demands. These two features -- people organizing themselves and

confronting power with grievances-- are central attributes of organizing. (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2001).

Therefore the ultimate task of community organizing can be viewed as that of mobilizing disenfranchised people to advocate on their own behalf in relationship to some power structure in order to achieve change (Pyles, 2009). In the case of Palestine, the goal of change is often expressed as that of overcoming oppression and achieving liberation (Pharr, 1996). This is appropriate to the Palestinian occupied territories where most of the natural resources (such as land and water) are subject to control by the Israeli occupation. Some would add the goal of building mutually supportive communities as a vital element of community organizing and change (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003).

All of these components are integral to what Pyles (2009) calls progressive community organizing. Community practitioners or organizers are using elements of organizing differently such as self-organization, confronting power, building community, and transforming oppression. Some organizers may not focus their work on transforming oppression and focus instead on achieving small victories, or righting a specific injustice. Community organizing is different than social services intervention, activism, advocacy, and community building because the emphasis is structural, not necessarily material.

For practitioners at grassroots NGOs this means that organizational structures, recruitment strategies, projects, service provision, advocacy and all the tactics can all lead and produce social and progressive change. Accountability on how to implement projects and engage community members to decide about their lives and community is an essential principle. Alinsky (1971) had a disrespect for what he called “do-gooders” who were helping the poor; instead, Alinsky believed in helping the marginalized help themselves.

Community organizing has a unique empowerment and change orientation. The role of community organizing has shifted from traditional methods of outreach to a more active role of empowerment. On the other hand, some social services have a traditional role such as providing relief benefits and basic needs assistance, while others have activities that involve advocacy to meet short and long term needs. These traditional types of social services tend to focus on empowerment, with an emphasis on strong social change, or activist orientation. PARC and UAWC have many programs that combined both social services and empowerment element such as women's cooperatives, farmers committees and small enterprise projects.

Kivel (2007) attempts to distinguish between social service and social change: social service work addresses the needs of individuals reeling from the personal and devastating impact of institutional systems of exploitation and violence. Social change work challenges the root causes of exploitation and violence. Social services work, though, can be done with an activist orientation when embedded within a social change framework. For example, women organizers do not often split community organizing from service provision. Given the importance to the Palestinian context of being under occupation and subject to constant violent actions by Israeli forces, this might be a good way for grassroots NGOs to think about the difference between service provision and community organizing work. Both are important and necessary especially in the Palestinian context, but ultimately organizing work is the only thing that really can get to the bottom of social issues. Although community organizing and advocacy are both important interventions, organizing the people to whom the issues impact directly may be the most effective strategy for long-term social change and sustainable communities.

Community building, the practice of identifying assets and problems and seeking resources and solutions in certain communities is important; however it is also often contrasted



to community organizing as Pyles (2009) noted. It could build leadership and small business ownership for poor people in a marginalized community instead of confronting power structures with demands. The focus may be to empower community economically, but rarely could be engage in an action that would directly attempt to take back power or transform systemic inequalities. For instance, a credit and savings program contributes to women's economic empowerment but doesn't help in mobilizing women against laws that discriminate against women. Another example is that it's easy for NGOs to implement projects, such as water resource management or the reduction of water usage considering limited water accessibility in WBGS, rather than to advocate for Palestinian rights to water when most of Palestinian water resources are controlled by Israeli authorities. It is important to note here as that although the donors are funding many projects, they often do not talk about the environmental devastation of these funded agricultural infrastructure projects such as agricultural land reclamation and water wells that became necessary as a side effect of the Israeli occupation. This has limited the capacity of grassroots NGOs in terms of mobilizing farmers to protest against the Israeli occupation, which is the central problem. Thus understanding the organization a person works for, the ideologies underlying policies, and the funding mechanisms of an organization are all critical to understanding a person's position as an organizer. Pyles (2009) emphasized that understanding one's own self, especially one's personal history and values, is also a critical component of organizing work. Shared identity as Palestinians who have been resisting all forms of injustice and oppression for 62 years is a fundamental issue. Grassroots NGOs may believe that they are engaged in social change activities that, unfortunately, may actually be reproducing the existing oppressive structures. They also may believe that they are promoting empowerment, when they are actually doing things *for* their constituency rather than doing the work *with* their

constituency. Terms such as social justice, social change and empowerment are utilized in a vague interpretation with regularity among organizers, activists and social workers. A practitioner stated:

It is important that I would bring justice at the site of what I work on through justice in the selection of people and justice in the selection of the site. Why do I choose this person and not that person? Most of times, I feel that I have to choose 20 and there are more than 20 at least who are in a dire need. So where is a justice here? Not always possible to achieve it, but I try to be fair enough among women. I try to be fair among women through targeting them at the level of family, women's club, and governance in the south (Hebron). I try to do my job in a fair, transparent and ethical way. This is un-debatable because it is very obvious. And that because If I worked in an immoral way, it means I am a non-transparent and unfair... (Participant 44, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

The role of the practitioner as organizer, then, is to “nourish, encourage, assist, enable, support, stimulate, and unleash the strengths within people” (Cowger, 1997, p. 62) to illuminate the strengths available to people in their own environments; and to promote equity and justice at all levels of society.

Empowerment has been an important concept in the practice of community development and organizing practice; it's an essential component of community organizing that contributes to increasing the levels of understanding, engagement, and personal power of individual citizens. Empowerment may happen through consciousness-raising activities, participation in social action, and engagement in leadership roles. It has therefore a political impact that empowerment efforts seek to develop through individual power in order to reshape the environment.

In community development practice, practitioners play many different roles while implementing projects such as trying to promote their organization's vision, strategies and goals. These roles as Toomey (2009) states are direct products of multiple forces- the goals of their organizations, the needs of community, and also the personal aspirations of the individual practitioners. The personal aspirations of practitioners who are working at Palestinian

development grassroots NGOs are greatly influence by the political background and framework. There is no doubt that those practitioners with political affiliation to leftist movements, have a very broad activist perspective that goes beyond their immediate professional performance. It is different from those practitioners who see their roles as professionals that are guided by professional manuals and forms. With that said, it is clear that political affiliation is an important factor that forms and shapes practitioners roles in the Palestinian grassroots NGOs PARC and UAWC at the community level.

These roles are also greatly influenced by continually evolving modes and shifts of development theory and practice of the day, lined with the buzzwords that often have little to do with the overall goal of community development, goals stated by organizations which are greatly influenced by donors' discipline (Jad, 2007). Grassroots NGOs, by accepting the myth of being professional, non-ideological and politically neutral as a result of international funding, create a clash between the role of service provisions and the policy advocacy role. This shifts the roles of their practitioners as grassroots organizers into technical professional practitioners. Therefore, it is very vital that development practitioners fully understand the implications of the roles that they are asked to play when interacting with communities especially in terms of what will happen to the subjects of such development projects after the practitioners have moved on.

The result of what is done in the name of community development is subject to the vision of the self-defined practitioners or Palestinian grassroots NGOs that are practicing development (Toomey, 2009). For that reason, it is essential to look at a precise understanding of what constitutes community development. Bhattacharyya's defines community development as, the 'pursuit of solidarity and agency (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 28). As such, it is important to look at community development in conjunction of other key elements such as empowerment.

A community member at one of the women's clubs states...

The first thing that we benefited as women is that we began to gather together and support each other. I now know every woman in the village by way of the club. Second thing we have classes every month such as sewing etc. I also benefited with my personal work such as ceramic painting and other artifices for the house and whoever wanted me to make them some they asked me and I sold them. Every woman likes to be heard. Put yourself in my place where nobody listens to me. However, when you come to the club you have a group of women listening to me... (Participant 55, November 19, 2009).

Craig (2002) defines empowerment in the community development context as 'the creation of sustainable structures, processes, and mechanism, over which local communities have an increased degree of control, and from which they have a measurable impact on public and social policies affecting these communities' (p. 03). Toomey (2009) identified eight roles commonly played out by practitioners in the context of community development. Four of these roles are defined to be traditional such as rescuer, provider, modernizer, and liberator. While the other four roles that identified to be as alternative roles range from being catalyst, facilitator, ally and advocate. While this section focuses on an overview about practitioners' roles in community development, the next section emphasizes practitioners' conceptions on their roles while conducting their practices for Palestinian Grassroots NGOs.

#### *Practitioner's Conceptions About Their Roles at Palestinian Grassroots NGOs*

Community development practitioners are the moving forces in community progress. These practitioners are also referred to as change agents, field workers, and community organizers. Change agents are viewed by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) as professionals who influence innovation decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency. Their main function is to seek adoption of new ideas. Chitre (1994) sees a change agent as a helper; that is, as a person or group that helps to facilitate the process of change in a given community. A community practitioner may help to mobilize and organize members of the community or a

group, guide them in identification of their problems and in planning for solutions. Practitioners as change agents serve as a communication link between the organization structure on the one hand and the beneficiary's context in the other hand. This linking role has led practitioners to be termed as catalysts of social action (Connor, 1968). They are also seen as mediators between the agency and the community. A female practitioner working with women commented on the need to have this link and use the information in community planning and community projects:

My role in the organization is as a researcher within the framework of an effective practitioner, of course, because I work directly with groups from the countryside. We are trying to grapple their needs and make the process of change for these groups. I am a link between these people and the institution... (Participant 32, personal communication, December 03, 2009).

The link that the practitioner provides between the organization and the community is often characterized by strain which arises from divergent expectations from both sides. Being an employee of the organization, the practitioner would tend in part to be loyal to the organization. A male practitioner working with farmers stresses the concern for the staff to be loyal to organization policy and vision says:

I consider myself one of the actors in the implementation of the policy of this institution and frankly, this is the difference between the institution's staff who works in PARC. There are those who have attached completely to the policy of the institution and carried out it in detail, and there are employees who work at certain hours. Just as employees. What makes me different is that, I do not adhere to specific hours of work and time. I always start my work before eight o'clock and I always finish my work after four o'clock in the evening. I am the only employee in the southern district most asset in vacations and always I receive messages informing me to take vacations. I consider myself one of the current members of this organization who keep and protect it and developed with it. (Participant 42, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

The organization expects its employees-- practitioners-- to meet the goals of its programs, which may be at odds with the needs of the community, indeed the objection was limited. The project is focused on the welfare of working animals. Practitioners considered it as a Western-oriented project which does not have any linkage to the real Palestinian context, particularly with the lack

of Palestinians' welfare in these communities. (Participant 50, personal communication, 2009), Practitioners as change agents have also been conceived as enablers, guides, brokers, and activists (Chitre, 1994). As an enabler the practitioner provides a link between the organization and the community, while as a guide the practitioner's role is not far moved from that of enabler. The agent's role as pointed out by Christenson and Robinson (1989) helps the community find the means for achieving its goals. The advocate is committed to the aspirations and desires of members of the community and is concerned with attracting attention to a serious situation or with resolving a particular dilemma. Activists are identical to advocates. Brokers are a sort of a guide, helping communities to locate resources and stimulate collective action (Grosser, 1967). They may also help people to identify their problems and seek solutions to them. A male practitioner working with farmers on agricultural extension program indicates...

I have believed since a long time that Palestinian farmer does not need a guide on how to farm. His problem is mainly the lack of a management and in this sense I believe that the reclamation is not on land and trees and stone only, but also the minds of humans. I have faith in the principle of collaborative thinking that if we worked together, we will be able to solve the problems without the intervention of any outside forces. I feel as a practitioner when I implement large-scale projects that farmers are not be able to do, such as reclamation of agricultural land that has the weight and pressure and the most important wells in which they are collecting rain water .And that is training for farmers on how to solve their problems and how to organize their priorities and how to identify problems. In my point of view, it is reclamation of the minds of people. I consider my role as practitioner, a role that has simple professional side, and the majority of it through getting to know people and to identify their concerns and problems and how to adopt a strategy to deal with them. I think I lean to have community organizing and leadership role to empower these people reaching their interests properly... (Participant 31, personal communication, October 26, 2009).

They may look at some of the administrative and professional measures (such as manuals, forms, indicators) and policies and collectively seek changes. A male practitioner working with farmers also stressed the importance and cited a critical concern for local people to

be aware of technical issues such as natural pesticides usage and the farm production and thus to change their behaviors in their farming activities says...

As a practitioner, I guide a farmer to know his situation and how he can improve the income and the quality of production by reducing the chemicals. Reducing the chemicals and using natural alternatives would help to increase production. If the farmer uses chemicals, he has to use small amounts. Each project has a manual and when you read the manual, you will know the essence of the subject. The substance of the matter is to reduce the use of chemicals and at the same time improve productivity while maintaining the quantities produced. I do workshops and guide the farmers in that... (Participant 36, personal communication, November 15, 2009).

According to Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) the success of an organization is determined by amount of effort, empathy and credibility. In Palestinian development grassroots NGOs, practitioners could be seen as encouragers, enablers, activists, and guides. Practitioners have different perspectives in defining their organization and its role in general. The definitions of the organization range somehow between being a professional development organization that implements projects, taking into account the needs of marginalized communities and of being a grassroots popular organization that has a national, community-based role and organizing framework, which seeks out primarily political, social and economic development changes in a broad sense. The difference in the definition of organizations depends on how practitioners understand the role of the institution, policy, vision and goal of existence. A key point here, this disparity in the definition of the organization, necessarily reflects the variance in practitioners' views and their definitions of their roles. Some of them consider that their roles have dimensions that go beyond the implementation of projects and follow-up. A male practitioner working on farmers organizing and extension programs states...

My role is to change the way of thinking of beneficiaries through the implementation of projects into the best practices of everything. Also my role is to guide beneficiaries to become part of the Palestinian decision-making. And my tasks are mainly working on the implementation of projects with the beneficiaries, reports and networking with other institutions that related to our work and with the masses. Also my role is to mobilize

beneficiaries and activate them on any national issue through the associations and groups... (Participant 34, personal communication, November 06, 2009).

Their roles are extended to the impact of these projects and community organizing as an approach toward community empowerment and sustainability. A female practitioner working with women stated:

For me as practitioner, the most important roles are that we are actually able to empower and develop women capacities. We have many women who have started with women's clubs with weak personalities. They couldn't demand their rights. Today women have become very empowered and strong with great tasks. There was a woman with weak character in one of women's clubs, and today she is very strong and bold and can meet with a minister and talk about demands without being aggressive- in a very diplomatic way. Of course, we worked with them through training sessions and I rely upon them, trust her works and achievements in many filled. At the beginning I was following up her work in details... (Participant 43, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

In sum two different frameworks could be found here that explain the practitioners' roles at these grassroots NGOs. The first is the activist framework where practitioners consider themselves as organizers and social agents working on organizing local communities around that community's own interests, building their capacities to defend them, and therefore able to advocate and to mobilize local and national levels. The second is the professional framework where practitioners contribute to building community capacity through the implementation of projects in both technical and administrative issues.

#### *What Guides Practitioners in Their Practices with Local Communities*

Development practitioners' roles and practices in Palestinian grassroots NGOs at the community level are subject to what they have been sent to do by their NGOs and the belief in what they are doing (their personal believes, values, and aspiration) that guides them in community practice. The roles that are commonly played out in community development practice by practitioners form and shape practitioners' orientation and guide their practice at the community level.



Practitioners at NGOs such PARC and UAWC vary in the definition of their roles of being professional staff or as being activist-oriented community organizers. This difference is contrary to the same system of values and norms that lead them and guide their practices as practitioners. A practitioner indicated:

What guide me is my identity and my self-sense of Palestinian people. I cannot say that the organization mobilize me and build my capacities in these concepts. I had these concepts before starting work in the organization. I was convinced and confident that the organization holds these concepts. I would like here as one of the employees to declare that what is being implemented in the organization is different from the organization's slogan. The employee here only performs the function of working hours and specific tasks. No one asks what is going on in your mind. If it happened and talked about my ideology, they will consider it a philosophy. And sometimes there are things that do not match my pattern of work here and function. There is a difference between my progressive ideology as a person and the philosophy of the organization's work. So I feel I'm working for the people and not for the organization... (Participant 33, personal communication, December 03, 2009).

In agreement with this quote, research has also shown that practitioners often engage in social justice work due to their personal motivation commitments (Buchbinder, 2007).

Rather than falling into despair and apathy, many people organize out of a sense of responsibility which is often related to an organizer's identity (Pyles, 2009) which has personal, collective, and spiritual dimensions. A practitioner states...

...Therefore three main things guide me in my work. First is the national dimension of being under Israeli occupation and the hard economic reality as a result of that. Therefore we have to serve the poor and provide them with all the possibilities that will help them to survive and stay strong. The second thing is the real needs of the people. And the third thing is role of women as change agents. I feel that change and mobilization are always started by women because they are not selfish and always advocating for the collective interests of the community... Participant 37, personal communication, November 03, 2009).

I asked committed practitioners what significance organizing and working with community had for them in their work. They offered a variety of responses that are categorized into themes

related to their individual value system, personalities, quest for social justice, and their own political affiliation. A practitioner expressed:

what guides my practices my nationalist commitment and my commitment to my intuition and my fellow Palestinians and this is not for my pay because I can work for a higher pay in a different institution but rather I work here because it fits my ideological perspective and the main ideas that I value. My leftist ideology in certain manners will allow to work with an institution that has programs that fits the goals of struggling against occupation. I will not leave the struggle or politics however I have changed the manner of struggle into something more positive and beneficial throughout my work in this institution. There are clear red lines that I will not pass in my work and they are anything that will deal with normalization of the occupation are denied completely and even in working with the Israeli peace movement. We refused to work in joint teams when Israeli officials are included in European projects this against our value system... (Participant 41, personal communication, September 02, 2009).

Values that guide practitioners' actions stem from the values related to professional work in these grassroots NGOs, such as value of transparency in the work. Another practitioner states a different perspective questioning transparency in the organization...

...what guides my work practices is the access marginalized communities for benefits from the projects and via the professional manner not on welfare manner. I am interested in bringing forth my services to the people I can assist, through working with them through the teamwork spirit. Transparency has a weak point in the institution, and the values of the institution are being questioned, and the behavior of our community needs work, so the contractors that we work with are mainly cheaters and I have evidence that proves this problem throughout different projects. (Participant 36, personal communication, November 15, 2009).

Transparency also represents by a set of criteria for selection of sites and beneficiaries in various locations. A practitioner states...

Transparency is one of the most important values, and I cannot accept names of people that benefit for the different projects based on their political affiliation. It is impossible for me to discriminate based on affiliation and therefore, there should be accountability in the local committees. So I am against favourism... (Participant 44, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

Another practitioner also confirms these professional values saying:

The values that should guide the work practices are transparency, faith in the work both nationally and professionally and the development discourse. All this represents my work

values. So it is impossible for me to compromise these values because the values are the ones that shape the professional and development achievement... (Participant 46, personal communication, October 21, 2009).

The national aspect is identified as a fundamental guiding principle in practice, which demonstrates the importance of ideological motivation to sustain struggle against oppression, which in this case is the Israeli occupation. These views are expressed by several practitioners who were interviewed:

The institutions' project should support most of the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land via nationalism, religion, and education. There should be main values of dealing with one another there is no way that we should promise people something that we cannot give them... (Participant 47, personal communication, December 07, 2009).

I work for the community and not a specific political party, and this makes it easier as a practitioner since I don't have pre-determined thoughts based on political affiliation and I like my organization because it provides resources for the community and accepts the other's opinions and nationalist thoughts... (Participant 40, personal communication, November 03, 2009).

What guides my work practices is transparency especially in dealing with farmers, so when one is straightforward with them they are willing to work with you. It is necessary to make them feel that you are a leader monitoring them... (Participant 46, personal communication, December 07, 2009).

Practitioners also emphasized on the values of justice, equality and democracy. A practitioner stated:

As I told you, we work on progressive thinking, and educational awareness and the occupation struggle and guarantying positive social norms. Everyone should depending on their efforts, and there progress and not the disorganization and favoritism... (Participant 31, personal communication, October 26, 2009).

A practitioner indicates a set of values that guide the community practices stated:

What guide my work practices are equality, transparency, and democracy which confirms my work values implemented throughout my project committees at different sites. So when I form a committee in the different community the members will be from various political parties. Then we survey the applications and announce the results and talk about the procedures and criteria of how we select our beneficiaries. Thus when someone asks

us to review his / her application, we do that and provide them with answers...  
(Participant 32, personal communication, December 03, 2009).

A few left-oriented practitioners stated that their values served as an analytical tool to identify and consolidate the progressive thought in the community and therefore promote social change.

A practitioner stated:

...Therefore, the set of values that lead my community practice is based on two parts. The first part is linked to the organization's goals, values, mission, vision and policies. The second part is derived from my national and political identity. I consider myself as progressive Palestinian seek to defend and serve the poor and marginalized people in Palestinian rural areas to counter all forms of oppression. Also I attempt to organize these marginalized around progressive thought on social justice issues such as equality and equity to women, including strengthening their roles and ensure their community participation. Similarly with regard to the role of youth, I consider it of its immense importance in creating community change.... (Participant 37, personal communication, June 20, 2008).

Some practitioners' consciousness is highlighted by their awareness of oppression and the vision of creating a sovereign community that is able to sustain its resources. Clearly these practitioners find that they immediately are compelled to connect this political awareness to situations in their lives (being raised and living under Israeli occupation).

The values that guide my practices are the developmental values in all meanings: ideologically, socially, politically, and economically and guarantee these values through selecting a suitable practitioner that fits the description for the project in the local community... (Participant 48, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

Palestinian nationalist identity plays a fundamental role in forming and shaping their practices working in critical political situation under Israeli occupation. A female practitioner was concerned about the sustainability of community resources as a means of resistance saying:

My role is to tell people that this needs to be developed. I don't mean here financially. The project's tasks are to tell families about resources. How can they develop any resource that family can use? And by saying that, it is not limited to economic development of the family. It's true we work on the development of economic situation, but we have to remember that we work on building capacities, building self-confidence and family's skills in order to build a successful project and sustainable communities that

are able to face the hard political situation... (Participant 44, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

Certain awareness and desire for community change is appropriate in this context. A practitioner cited as a concern the capacity of community members to get empowered and thus stand up for their community and indicated:

For me as practitioner, the most important roles are that we are actually able to empower and develop women capacities. We have many women who have started with women's clubs with weak personalities. They couldn't demand their rights. Today women have become very empowered and strong with great tasks. There was a woman with weak character in one of women's clubs, and today she is very strong and bold and can meet with a minister and talk about demands without being aggressive- in a very diplomatic way. Of course, we worked with them through training sessions and I rely upon them, trust her works and achievements in many filled. At the beginning I was following up her work in details... (Participant 43, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

These practitioners have a distinct ideological framework that guides them in their practices.

As I told you, I worked on progressive thought by raising awareness and fighting the occupation, and promoting social development among the people. Therefore each person will be evaluated according to his efforts and not by favoritism.... (Participant 31, personal communication, October 26, 2009).

The following quotation reflects the sense of collective identity centered on social justice and freedom fostered by their activist's framework. A practitioner stated:

...What guide my work practices are the values of women in changing the social structure. We are aiming to create progressive community that has equality and justice. Thus it is impossible to comprise women's rights even if the institution comprised it. I will probably lose my job to ensure that I do not comprise my values... (Participant 35, personal communication, November 15, 2009).

In the Palestinian case, some practitioners who consider themselves as organizers or activists can't separate the linkage between their personal values and their professional performance, as indicated by a practitioner:

The first value that guides my practice is justice throughout the work in different sites, and the justice in choosing a site, and beneficiaries The work should be just, transparent and moral and this should not be negotiated. So any immoral work is impossible to be just and transparent... (Participant 43, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

In sum, a set of values guide practitioners' practice in grassroots NGOs that range from principles that assure the professional orientation of their practices such as transparency, the beneficial criteria, criteria for selecting the sites, and the values of nationalist commitment to assure the steadfastness of people in their land. In doing so, communities are expected to be better able to oppose the Israeli occupation and actions through the promotion of grassroots democracy. Political awareness which endorses the values of social justice, equality, and democracy as a tool for promoting progressive ideology in the community has been a determining factor to few practitioners to guide their practice at the community level.

#### *How Do Grassroots NGOs Build Practitioners' Capacities to Conduct their Roles?*

Community organizing groups in Occupied Palestine have for a long time been working to build the skills of residents as public actors and engage them in collective action to achieve their common goals. By bringing Palestinians from the most marginalized and disadvantaged communities into public life, community organizing expands community participation, enabling residents to influence public decisions and build vibrant communities that serve their needs. Organizing efforts don't look exactly alike, but effective organizing initiatives share certain common features that distinguish community organizing from other approaches. The core features that provide the framework for comparing the models of organizing (Smock, 2004) are building individual capacity which focuses on developing local leaders, building community capacity through networks and social capital, and building a community governance structure. Also it focuses on developing the community's capacity for change through collective action via community members' capacities to diagnose the community problems and identify appropriate solution. So NGOs shape the strategies that community members adopt for addressing these problems and facilitate concrete solutions to community's problems to help improve

community's quality of life. Organizing performed by Palestinian NGOs such as PARC and UAWC goes beyond its community-based focus to contribute to broader social structural change.

Given that each grassroots NGOs has its own prerequisite to reveal its vision of community organizing and service provision as development intervention, it is obvious that training has been used as a tool to build practitioners' capacities as organizers in order to reveal this vision. The guiding principles for organizers are to build community capacity to stand for and do for themselves. The reality however is totally different.

In doing so, NGOs have to develop clear plans on how to build practitioners' capacities through training or capacity building to achieve their long term goal. It is important to know the impact of these programs on practitioners' performance whether with organizing activist orientation or professional orientation or both. In other words, how do these training sessions or on job training build the practitioners' capacities as organizers as activists or professionals?

The organization's efforts to develop individual community members' leadership skills and their capacities to participate effectively in the public sphere are of immense importance. Meaningful participation requires a range of skills and abilities that reduce the effects of social inequalities and the impact of class disparities to participate effectively in community public life. In fact creating a base of grassroots leaders is an important step in building a community's capacity to generate progressive change. Community leaders, who are activists with public leadership roles, have to develop as critical thinkers and agents of social change at the community level. Thus practitioners are very important players in this sense; as Gandhi said, "you must be the change you wish to see in the world" (Pyles, 2009)

Practitioners mentioned they were engaged in training courses about report writing, project management, communication skills, financial management, visibility studies, public

relation, strategic planning, gender and development, networking, and human rights. They also participated in technical training related to agriculture such as organic food production, integrated pest management, irrigation system, geographic information system (GIS), and agriculture extension.

Very few training workshops were focused on building practitioners' capacities to organize communities and local committees. In other words, there is a lack of training sessions that covered community organizing, leadership skills, advocacy and networking, human rights, gender and development, and local committee's formation. It is with no doubt that the majority of these training sessions and capacity building programs revealed the organizations' concerns of building the staff capacities as professional practitioners to best implement projects than as community organizers to seek the community progressive change.

Offering training on empowerment, communication skills, and other types of technical assistance to services organizations "grassroots NGOs" would be services in the narrowest sense. (Pyle, 2009). Practitioners didn't engage in training sessions in group's dynamics or interaction, public and local governance. However, many of the practitioners stated explicitly that they were engaged in continuing professional education in rural development. While organizers may hold strong values and be interested in attending to the means or the process of organizing, in reality they find themselves working in practical projects where achieving concrete measurable outcomes in real time for communities is necessary. Alinsky (1971) discussed that organizers preferred focusing on achieving practical victories in their work and concentrated less on clarifying values and engaging in consciousness-raising efforts. These approaches are favored by some organizers.



Practitioners also mentioned that they spent most of their time implementing projects, monitoring, and following all the administrative and financial work in this regard. They can neither be held accountable for or have time to undertake their community organizing work. Grassroots NGOs can hold them accountable to some degree through their projects' implementation performance. Thus most of practitioners' focus is on technical and administrative work than looking beyond the projects and programs with community organizing orientation. The more community issues and problems become translated into technical questions through projects, the more they discourage self-help and broad participation. Grassroots NGOs need to translate these technical questions into broader clear policies that encourage community's participation and ultimately promote community autonomy. Progressive community organizers should manifest the notion of empowerment and to better acts; they have to engage in a national analysis of the political, social, economic, and cultural context of rural communities in order to be able to frame their social issues and specific community issues. In sum the nature of training and capacity building programs that target practitioners indicate the organization's vision of practitioners' roles.

#### *Practitioner's Conceptualization: Local Leadership and Allies*

Because power and privilege can subtly be used to marginalize and silence people in both organizations and communities, such leadership qualities and actions can be effective in bringing about empowered organizations and communities. To move toward fundamental change requires leaders with a different kind of visionary commitments. These are "transformative" (Smock, 2004, p. 62) leaders who demonstrate a strong commitment in the principles of equality, equity and empowerment, particularly as it relates to gender. Leaders need to be committed to use power not as an instrument of domination and exclusion but as an instrument of liberation,

inclusion and equality. What is needed from local and national leaders is a strong commitment to the principle of social justice and value-driven policies. Eventually, this will direct local actions that create conditions enabling marginalized groups to have enhanced access to the new knowledge and opportunities. This “transformative leadership” is driven by considerations of community sustainability.

The opinions and the orientation of leadership varies amongst the interviewed practitioners; however the main characteristic is the confidence in the professional criterion related to project professionalism and implementation. Even when the practitioners express their dedication to change, their assessment of local leaders demonstrates a perception that transformative leadership is lacking. From the ideals expressed by practitioners, there are two types of leadership with varying degrees of these traits. The professionally-oriented leadership rests on certain traits such as issues of control, strong personality, transparency, representation of the credibility of organization. A practitioner stated:

The local leader -the one who we rely on in this village- is the main representative. He represents the institutions, its thoughts, and its goals and provides us with the credibility of the institution. He also should give us the good ideals of the institution; essentially he represents the institution in a positive manner. (Participant 34, personal communication, November 06, 2009).

It also manifests the ability to make decisions on behalf of a group, facilitating meetings, coordinating activities, and representation of organizations vision and policies. A practitioner stated:

The leader should have a strong personality, enjoys working with people, and has knowledge of the project site, represents the visions of the institutions and able to defend it. The leader should have the ability to solve the problems in the sites for the project, and to implement all things the institution requests and have the ability to communicate with the people... (Participant 46, personal communication, December 07, 2009).

These traits manifest managerial and bureaucratic models, which is lacking the capacity to

impact community change. A practitioner stated:

...The leader will have a strong personality and have personal responsibility and have a good manner of dealing with things. The leader is the one who can deal with the peoples' problems and able to speak about it and he can assure large form of involvement in the project. He does not need to exempt anyone from the local community that has ability to explain the project. (Participant 47, personal communication, December 07, 2009).

A practitioner also emphasizes professional oriented leadership by another set of criteria such as willingness to utilize a transparent decision-making process... "the person that has the ability to reach the people who has the most need and he tries to implement professional criteria with transparency and without only catering to certain clients from same family and friends"...

(Participant 48, personal communication, November 15, 2009), reflecting the needs, concerns and desires of a group, assure effective participation through the reinforcement of team work spirit and community inclusion. A practitioner indicated:

The leader is the leader of the social community that can work with the team and has leadership qualities in dealing with everyone regardless of their social status and economic status and he should be accepted by the community and with this he will be a leader. (Participant 32, personal communication, December 03, 2009).

While a group of practitioners express the activist oriented leadership which identified by a desire to change the structure, to be a vocal leader who encourage initiative ideas and risk taking, delegate to challenge, "The leader is the one who authorizes work upon others and he follows up with it and he has a strong personality and huge charisma, in work and not in an objective lens" (Participant 55, personal communication, December 08, 2009). A leader is also who guide, coach to ensure success, reinforce good work and good attempts. A practitioner stated:

He is the person that should have the capability of working with more than one village and he should be liked and generous and he should not benefit from the projects even if he fits the criteria of getting benefits from the projects. He should also try to encourage everyone to participate in the projects and he should be a team worker and encouraging

working together and with this, we as part of the institutions we should be able to depend on him at all times. (Participant 31, personal communication, October 26, 2009).

The leader is also the one who share information, knowledge, and skills and provide support without taking over. A practitioner indicated:

The leader is the person who works in the local community yet he has little interference and has a big impact and he should have a role in the good governance, however he should not interfere in every step and should lead the community by their will and by the capabilities. (Participant 40, personal communication, November 03, 2009).

Another practitioner added:

A leader is a person that should take care of implanting the project so that projects should succeed. The most successful projects are ones led by women because the woman handles the responsibility of the family more than the man and she has more free time and she has more commitment than the man. (Participant 42, personal communication, December 08, 2009).

Few numbers of practitioners combined the two types of leadership orientation:

A leader is a person that has enough knowledge and dedication for the project. These are the main characteristics that should be in a leader. He should be capable in making decisions, he should be liked by the community people, and not affiliated with political factions with vary narrow viewpoint. He should have the ability to keep communication strong and flowing with all people and able to convince the people of his opinion. (Participant 45, personal communication, September 02, 2009).

The critical question is, can activist type leaders be as effective as or more so than their professional counterparts? What does this do to the practitioners? The evidence related to activists leaders tells us that activists oriented leadership offers more advanced skills training to community members who are relatively confident, open to taking public leadership roles. This will encourage more activists at local communities who are critical thinkers and agents of social change, compared to traditional leadership roles, which seek immediate solutions to meet basic needs. The donors influence the institutional policy, which then influences the operational orientation toward professional, leading to community outcomes oriented toward professionalism

instead of activism. NGOs in my study did very little to develop or promote the transformative leadership skills of the community members.

Practitioners at grassroots NGOs have to identify their internal struggles related to local issues and public struggles around identity politics as Palestinians and coalition building. They have to be able to read and contextualize the current political, and organizational conditions in any given moment especially in the ever fluid Palestinian situation, so they can better prepared to build community capacity for that. Understanding the way our networked society functions can enhance and deepen community organizing practice, by understanding approaches that strengthen social capital as well as assess social networks; organizations are then better positioned to be successful in their community development practice. But without confronting power structures, the practices of building community and strengthening assets may fall short of remedying inequalities (Pyles, 2009). Practitioners' vision also differs on the definition of their grassroots NGOs' allies in accordance with their definition of the organization's role. In fact, practitioners who consider the organization as grassroots NGO, consider CBOs and local community as main ally of the organization. They also consider left leaning political factions as main allies. This will give the power and support in the face of any external pressure. Moreover it will empower the organization to create a lobbying force to advocate for community interests at national policies. However, criticism was raised by practitioners that these grassroots NGOs went far away from their bases to create a state of alienation. With that said, grassroots NGOs turned their communities into recipients of projects' services. While another group of practitioners, who consider these NGOs as professional, stated clearly that ministry of agriculture civil society organizations that are working in the same sector would be their allies.

*Progressive Social Change: Capacity of Externalities to Facilitate or Impede Community Progress*

The purpose of this section is to understand the strategies, policies, and vision used by Palestinian grassroots NGOs to address and endorse community change. This section aims to take stock of grassroots NGOs tools for the analysis, interpretation and understanding of social change process, particularly on a micro level – community level. These tools will be examined at three distinct levels: the organizational level through policies, vision, mission and strategies; practitioners’ self-definition of social change through their community practices; and at the community level, where community members have certainly entertained ideas, notions, and images about social change. How these community members internalize and define community change through their personal experience as a result of grassroots NGO interventions is the topic of concern.

Greater weight is given here to the practitioners and community levels. The dynamics of the organizational level were addressed in earlier chapters (chapters 4 and 6) around variables such as gender mainstreaming, acquiescence, and the donor question. The emphasis of this section is to further contextualize the practitioners’ perspective of community change and the actual community change outcomes. I will narrowly assess the organizational perspective through analysis of the mission statements since the organizational level has been more robustly explored previously in this dissertation.

Palestinian grassroots (NGOs) have taken the service provision role in the absence of a stable central authority and emerged in the Palestinian territories to mobilize a community whose sustainable development opportunities had been destroyed by the Israeli occupation. They provide services for those most in need, for those trying to survive and for those barely making

ends meet at rural areas. Moreover, they claim to work for social change by creating a society in which institutions and organizations are equitable and just and all individuals are empowered to participate in the decisions that affect their lives in their communities. While there is some overlap between social service provision and social change work, the two may not necessarily coincide. This section will elucidate the extent grassroots service provision may contribute to create progressive community change. Several more specific questions will be critical in answering this question.

Progressive community change is defined as people organizing themselves, confronting power with grievances and actions to change their lives. The ultimate task of community organizing is to mobilize disenfranchised people to advocate on their own behalf to access the power structure in order to achieve needed changes such as overcoming oppression and achieving liberation from the Israeli occupation. Indicators of progressive community change include democratic grassroots participation, transformative leadership, and sustainable community resources.

*Organization orientation: mission statement.* Social change as a process, a goal, and a guiding principle is the foundation for grassroots NGOs' purpose and work. This perspective and accompanying strategy is reflected in a two-pronged approach to meeting the needs of communities: self-determination, organizing and support of local leadership development, community identified solutions. It also assures the empowerment of communities, understanding and trying to act on the causes of problems and oppressions while addressing the immediate needs identified by the local community organizations. Social change strategies therefore, depend on people's self-determination and empowerment, local and grassroots leadership development and support, and a common understanding of the causes of the problems.

Grassroots NGOs continues to be guided by people grounded in the communities and efforts of practitioners who develop this working definition of social change. The vision of these NGOs about community change is reflected in their *mission statements*. It is very important for NGOs to critically assess their ideals and vision, how they manifest in their actual work they are doing, in the process of acquiring funds, and in implementing projects along with other development interventions and what NGOs want to bring about fundamental change to the way our communities are structured. Are they able to truly address the root of the problems rural communities face? Mission statements can be broad guide to the workings of an NGO. We now turn to the orientation of the NGOs as expressed in their mission statements.

There are many similarities between the mission statements of both PARC and UAWC. PARC's mission statement asserts certain vague elements of community change such as empowerment, grassroots participation, and sustainability.

PARC is a leading Palestinian NGO working in the field of rural development, environment protection, and women empowerment. We offer technical assistance and support, along with extension services to individuals and organizations working in similar fields. In carrying out our projects and activities, we rely upon the active and broad grassroots participation of our beneficiaries, and, in process, develop our experts' capabilities and improve our employees' skills. By doing so, we aim to significantly contribute to the building of a Palestinian democratic and civil society (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 2009).

UAWC's mission statement addresses a limited and also vague definition of community change. Many objectives contribute to clarify and instrumentalize the definition of community change such as: the improvement of agricultural revenues of the rural society, and protection of farmers' rights, lands, and water supplies from all marginalizing policies and natural disasters. Enhancing and empowering rural women and improving the level of food security are fundamental objectives.



To improve the living conditions of the Palestinian agricultural society, within a comprehensive framework of sustainable rural development in a manner that would enhance self-reliance and activate the role of local agricultural committees and the concept of voluntary and team work (Union of Agriculture Working Committees, 2007).

Taken together, these mission statements represent a set of principles such as empowerment, sustainable development, and community participation. This is insufficient without much clearer analysis of how these principles could be translated into a social justice question in the communities to advance the common good and ultimately the sustainable communities. However these important principles require a change in power relations and structures that run much deeper than the implementation of projects and programs. A change from using power over others by having the knowledge and money, to advance the communities' interests and thus using power to facilitate self-development far away from the influence of international funding agencies. These mission statements can then serve as a barrier to some practitioners, or to embolden those who see the mission statements as guiding principles.

*Practitioner level: community change orientation.* Practitioners at Palestinian grassroots NGOs such as PARC and UAWC vary in the definition of community change as an impact of their development intervention at local communities. In fact most of these definitions are driven by practitioners' set of principles that guide them in their community interventions including their personal beliefs, values, and aspiration. These are further defined by the mission statements of their designated NGOs. All of this shapes their perception of community change.

We can then classify perspectives of community change into two categories: reform verses change. *Reform* is more rigid in that it instrumentalizes more bureaucratic functions of the NGO. This instrumentalization is used for evaluation, and as stated earlier many NGOs do not assess the outcomes of practitioners based upon intent of abstract social change, but instead on strict measures tied to project documentation and oftentimes the vague mission statements. A

few number of practitioners linked the community change with the extent the organization used transparent and clear criteria in implementing projects. They also consider the efforts of organization in organizing people at the communities in local committees, cooperatives and community based organization as a way to establish civil society that would adopt people's needs and national cause. A lack of structural change, but more material outcomes are evident. A practitioner states:

Change in my opinion is that when CBOs get any project that they need, it has to be through a committee who can supervise it and is able to assist people who deserve it. I mean here if for instance any community gets a greenhouses project and they don't have available water, they have to refuse taking it. They have to know their real needs and ask for example to get water tanks, so they can benefit by collecting the rain falls. In this way we can contribute to change their aspects... (Participant 36, personal communication, November 15, 2009).

The *change* perspective however does not set up mission statements or evaluatory criteria as rigid law, but as guiding principles nested within the objectives of a broader ideological perspective. Many practitioners consider the change of women's lives by enhancing their participation in development projects and decisions about their lives are of immense importance to change the community. A good number of practitioners highlight changing the patriarchal culture in the communities through the strengthening women's economic independent. In doing so, practitioners considered gender mainstreaming by targeting both women and men as a good strategy to fulfill the progressive community change. A practitioner indicates:

You will surprise how women's personality got changed after finished the projects compare to when started it. Women expressed how their spouses treated them in a totally different way. Their spouses start to listen to them, share the responsibility with them and by doing so they enhanced their income through their project. At the political level and in this home gardens project we retain the attention of people to their land and how to benefit from cultivation. When we visit the community later, we found greener. Thus, there was a cosmetic effect on the community and there is a better economic return... (Participant 32, personal communication, December 03, 2009).

A very few practitioners who clearly have ideology were able to define a community change as progressive change which tied to the socio-economic situation in Palestinian society. A practitioner stated:

It's very difficult for me to identify the community change. There are many players in the community who can influence it. Community is like a wheel that is moving in different directions by more than one party. Every party is pushing it and it's walking on a local ground but within international influence which pushed it strongly. Therefore I can say the Palestinian society is not independent and is influenced by many forces locally and internationally. There is a difference between ambition, desire and the need for community change. Now there are other circumstances by which I mean here it might strength of capitalism and war and the fate of peoples and not to give people their rights and freedom. Here I would like to note that America wants to dump the world's carbon dioxide. With the decline of the leftist and progressive forces and as a result of the difficult economic situation, religious forces have grown in traditional societies. It was easy for local communities to adopt ideas. We in Palestine do not control the circumstances or conditions do not. I consider progressive change is an ongoing process. In order to get to a progressive society, there must be a mutual dialogue between people in the community, participate in the decision and this is the importance of societal change is the process of changing socio-economic. The foundation of change is people's participation, and participation in making decisions. Whenever possible, the community was strong and enhances popular participation in decision-making, the more we can translate them into the development of progressive society. The problem of our organization is that it coincided with two generations with a huge ideological difference, which ultimately creates an ideological gap... (Participant 31, personal communication, October 26, 2009).

These perspectives come from the practitioners alone. But what about the voice of those impacted directly by the intervention of these practitioners through their project and program implementation? Do the claims of practitioners bear out when measured against the judgments of these community members? A practitioner indicates... "Change for me means change women's role at local communities. Women must have a significant role at the projects committee in the community"... (Participant 44, personal communication, December 03, 2009).

*Community level: giving voice to actual outcomes.* Both PARC and UAWC have a significant role on rural development including food security, income generation and protecting

against land confiscation; environmental protection; and strengthening women's position in society through different projects and programs as mentioned in previous chapters and sections. In the case of Palestinian grassroots NGOs, changing policies, improving programs, and enhancing economic access for disenfranchised (powerless) communities represent reform work and indeed are an integral part of progressive social change. Therefore it is important and useful to think about the real transformative change of political and social structures with some organizations containing elements of both dimensions.

Drawn on interviews with community members at CBOs and agriculture cooperatives and committee, community change is divulged by how their lives are changed as a result of NGOs' projects and development interventions. A female community member stresses the important role of women's clubs in empowering women through different projects and activities such as awareness workshops and stated:

Oh God, this club is very important. First thing, it relieves pressure, so even if the woman doesn't work anything when she goes to the club she fills free time. When all the women get together we relieve our stresses to each other. The instructors come and give us knowledgeable lessons, because the women don't know anything and don't their rights. So these lessons make them stronger and increase their awareness." For example, we focused on women's empowerment and then on the agricultural sector. These are the most important aspects because every woman will understand her problems and how to deal with her family and her kids and how to do with disabled people. So the projects given to these women are a lot, so part of the women didn't even know how to grow a mint tree. When they did an agricultural project, and used to provide for them everything, the women grew to love their yard and began competing with her neighbor. They started bringing wells which many families are in need of and in the summer for two or three months they would buy expensive water but these wells solved the problem... (Participant 55, personal communication, November 19, 2009).

The NGOs such as PARC and UAWC conduct services to local communities through women's clubs, women's cooperatives and farmers committee. These services range from extension services, seeds, food baskets during emergency situation, and projects such as home gardens. A community member indicated:

They gave us flour and a lot of other things, like oil, and sugar. They also give us seeds to grow. At one time, we got chicken and more of this stuff that we need for our daily lives. Other thing is that we took sewing, ceramic lessons. However, for the members we get a lot of stuff and because of this I joined the club... (Participant 58, personal communication, November 16, 2009).

However, changing gender stereotypes requires changes in gender roles ideology and social structure that perpetuate gender discrimination and hierarchy. Women's clubs play a fundamental role changing the gender stereotypes about women in conservative rural areas and open new space for women to develop their identity. Women's club members stated:

... Well, I have just left the house, and left my cooking, now I am seeing these people and I benefit from the project. Culture workshops such as violence against women, or on adolescences, and many other things such as sewing classes are very important workshops for me. There are also doctors that do blood tests every day, including women health and general doctors that test for diabetes and most of the general testing... (Participant 64, personal communication, November 19, 2009).

Women's based organizations also build solidarity between women. It is very important aspect for women's club members as many members express it explicitly and this ultimately contributes to empower women through developing women's identity. A community member stated:

In the club, we formed social solidarity committee and now when there was a woman with a problem, we would all go visit her. Or if a woman is in need of something we will gather and provide her with what we could. So, the women felt that the club was near to their hearts and is in their best interests so I began to participate in all the activities we then became members and even more active than the ones that were already members... (Participant 56, personal communication, November 16, 2009).

Another community member added:

The woman will be more cultured, she will have goals and knowledge. Every woman likes to be heard. Put yourself in my place where nobody listens to me. However, when you come to the club you have a group of women listening to me. Women go and also can take religious courses and learn communication skills in dealing with others... (Participant 67, personal communication, November 19, 2009).

This change required targeting both men and women. An expression of male community member affiliated to same organization indicates the need of real change in the patriarchal culture in order to let these women's empowerment efforts to succeed. He stated:

Also, the women can't carry the machine pump and even the chemical spray will affect her more than men. There are also cultural reasons, for example I will not accept that me and a woman will stay by ourselves in the greenhouse for a long time frame, because there is bound to be conversations and stories and religiously and culturally this is not accepted... (Participant 49, personal communication, November 18, 2009).

Another male cooperative member expressed his refusal for any women to join the cooperative stated:

Because we are in a rural area and there are rules for the women, and when the women want to entire this kinds of organizations we find it weird. How does she wish to sit between men? We are in a rural area and not in the city, which is freer... (Participant 52, personal communication, November 17, 2009).

In the area of economic development grassroots NGOs promotes community based economic development and opportunity so women can increase their income and assets through improved economic development policies and projects. Women's cooperative is a good example of that. This cooperative achieve a better set of tradeoffs between social and economic outcomes, and a lack of challenging the structures of social power in the process of building material security which women need.

CBOs are also conducting extension services that would enhance the agriculture production by changing agriculture practices. A community member indicated:

The organization started many projects including nursery and thank God it is 100% effective. And we were cut off from the Israeli pesticides and we made an alternative called combust. There are also workshops where every month there are agricultural engineers and they teach us how to reduce our consumption of water because a long time ago we used to turn on the motor and leave it on. However, when we learned how to grow with drip irrigation we reduced our water supply, and the engineers started to give us lessons on how to efficiently use the pesticide spray. This helped better the farmer and we learned to use solar sterilization instead of gas which used to cost us 3000 shikel (NIS). So for example who had 3-4 acres needed 4000 shikel and now 2000 shikel will

sterilize the entire land. This is with credit to the knowledge given to us from the agricultural engineers and this way has become more useful than the gas. (Participant 50, personal communication, November 18, 2009).

Transforming system of power is the key to sustainable future in which people in communities can live in dignity and fulfillment. A community member stated:

I'm not a member in this agricultural committee in our village. I just joint it after they announce about this particular project (land reclamation). I didn't know anything about this committee before. Now I know that this land reclamation project aims to help the farmers to preserve their land from Israeli confiscation. I will definitely benefit from this project. I have four sons who are attending different universities and I'm fully in charge of their educational fees, transportation, and other fees. This project will help me protect my land and increase my income in two years... (Participant 69, personal communication, December 10, 2009).

Such a clear stand must be taken for social justice issues, which would simultaneously help NGOs to make a reality of their stated mission for social change. Educating communities about the root causes of oppression and injustice, organizing and actions led by people working to control their own lives are very essential elements in this regard. Eliminating barriers to full participation in society (i.e. sexism, classism, and exclusion from decision-making processes) is also a driving factor. Focusing on efforts to change cultural, social, political, and economic systems and institutions that create, accommodate, and perpetuate social injustice will help to establish genuine and transformative leadership role in the community at large. This is what is considered as activist change or community progressive change that is about structural transformative change. While reform is represented when change impacts material aspects of life, and marginal transformation, which is definitely important to create community change.

### *Conclusion*

The NGOs co-opt the language of the left: empowerment, gender equality, sustainable development” and grassroots bottom-up leadership. The problem is that this language is linked to a framework of collaboration with donors’ agencies that subordinate practical activity to non-

confrontational politics, not social-structural change. The local nature of NGOs activity means that empowerment never goes beyond influencing small areas of social life, with limited resources and within existed political conditions.

NGOs emphasize projects, not movements or social structure; they “mobilize” people to produce at the margins but not to struggle to control the basic means of production and wealth through different cooperatives or productive collective projects; they focus on technical financial assistance of projects, not on structural conditions that shape the everyday lives of people. Practitioners at these grassroots NGOs discuss the “excluded”, powerlessness, and gender discrimination without moving beyond the superficial symptom of the social system that produces these conditions. They incorporate the poor into projects or programs, and despite the claims of many local successes, the overall power structure of these communities stands unchallenged (the marginalized serve their role as indicators of change, not as actual stakeholders empowered to take control and become leaders).

When we think about the efficacy of using limited, scarce resources to have the biggest positive impacts on the lives of everyday people, it becomes obvious that a change perspective offers more complete progress than does a reform orientation. Therefore the distinction between practical and strategic gender needs in this regard, is a useful tool for development planners. According to Moser and Moser (2005) it is important for development planners to understand the distinction because frequently, different needs are confused. Clarification helps in identifying more realistic limitations as to what can be accomplished through development planning, as also the restrictions of different policy interventions.



## CHAPTER SIX: MANAGING GENDER: IDENTITY FORMATION IN A PALESTINIAN GRASSROOTS NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

### *Introduction*

Although gender issues have been on the development agenda since the early 1970s (Porter & Sweetman, 2007), it is only in 1990s that development organizations in Palestine, including NGOs have stressed the question of gender and gender mainstreaming within their organizational boundaries. Talking about gender in Palestinian development is now commonplace. Rarely does a project proposal get submitted without involving a section dealing with gender issues. This reflects the global movement towards a greater understanding of the impact gender has on the development process. Even so, the conventional development studies continue to ignore the centrality of women's work in predicting and explaining development activities, and gender is still at a substantive level.

This is particularly true in Palestinian agricultural grassroots NGOs. The reality of working in the agricultural sector in Palestine is that rarely does practical work take a true gender perspective. Agricultural extension is still predominantly directed towards men, the term farmer is often associated with men only, and projects for women tend to deal with traditional women's roles such as food processing and home gardens (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 2000). Bauman's (1993, p. 2) statement that more research is needed to show that women's access to and control over resources is as central to development dynamics as is men's is still pertinent here, where the existing research on gender in agriculture is limited and there is a demonstrable need to develop a clearer understanding of how gender issues impact the development process. Therefore this chapter draws on my fieldwork with PARC and UAWC in the late 2000s to examine grassroots NGOs' willingness and capacity as organizations to address gender equity and equality in their organizations and their development practices. How are

women empowered through their participation in grassroots collective action? How does the intervention of grassroots organizations, through programs and projects, affect gender power relations at community level?

The remainder of the chapter proceeds as follows. First, the chapter contextualizes the gendered dimensions of both PARC and UAWC. Second, the theoretical foundations of gender mainstreaming within NGOs as a whole is presented. Third, the chapter then explores how gender mainstreaming is used in the educational process. And fourth, the chapter covers two levels at which NGOs transform gendering into action--the substantive and structural levels. This is followed by the conclusion.

#### *The Context of Palestinian Development Grassroots NGOs*

*Brief description of PARC, purpose and past related experience.* PARC is a leading non-profit organization working in the field of rural development, environmental protection and enhancement of rural women's roles and status as presented in Chapter 3. Since it was established in 1983, PARC has relied on active and broad grassroots participation of beneficiaries parallel to the promotion of the expertise and skills of the staff. Through the rural women's development department and later as an institution, PARC concentrates on organizing women in rural centers and clubs to enable them to offer regular services and activities to needy women in the respective villages. PARC supports these centers by offering training, credit and savings programs, household economy projects, income generating projects, and food processing demonstrations. In addition, PARC helps women develop leadership and management skills and establishes networks with women's organizations in rural areas for advocacy activities. PARC stated from its establishment that the desired rural development could be done only through self-help efforts. Therefore PARC worked to strengthen the base through its ties and its social

context. Initially, the women's cause wasn't a main priority for the national action plan. PARC has since begun working more with women, supported by the fact that women play a key role in the agricultural sector.

PARC continued to seek out the appropriate interventions to access rural women in a way that is consistent with the social environment of the Palestinian countryside. As a result of the absence of experience, PARC conducted a preliminary study on the domestic Palestinian economy in 1987. The results of this study confirmed the important role played by women, not only within the family, but on the scope of women's role in agriculture. The study revealed two main difficulties women face in accessing resources and the lack of such opportunities for them. Based on this understanding, PARC realized that the proper development cannot be achieved without an active participation of women, which requires a direct and clear approach. The programs range from making "efficient" use of women's time and labor and the reduction of poverty of women and their dependents to the empowerment of women as a marginalized social group. Therefore work with rural women has evolved in the following models that can be complementary and would be most likely to happen under certain contextual, programmatic and organizational conditions.

#### *PARC's household production model*

This model was associated with the uprising in 1987, which was dictated by the Intifada methods and trends, such as providing aid directly to the population in conditions of closures and curfews. This in turn supports domestic production to replace the shortfall in goods as a result of boycotting Israeli's goods and promoting self-sufficiency. One of PARC's goals at that time aimed to turn home gardens into production units, so that women would play the main role in

working and management. This emphasizes the ability of women, and clarifies the important role played by women in Palestinian society, which goes beyond the reproductive role.

#### *Women's cooperatives model*

Past experience confirmed the importance and the possibility of women's involvement in the productive process through their own enterprises. The women's unit worked to organize women into small production groups called women's cooperatives. The women's unit has been able to establish 43 women's cooperatives that have worked with over 200 women from various locations of the West Bank and Gaza to reduce the financial risk that results from individual work (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 1999). PARC conducted an assessment study in 1994 of this experience. Results of this study emphasized the importance of experience and the positive impact on the family level but less on women's level. The study pointed to the effective response of women with these projects as a gateway to gain access to an important source to increase the income of their families. Cooperatives provided critical technical support to its success. However, the low returns of these cooperatives associated with the seasonal work, and difficulties like marketing its products, have contributed to the decline in their productivity. Many cooperative's lack principles in their core work. Thus this study recommended that work should be done to identify the program clearly, with emphasis on the importance of women's income-generating projects. The study recommended reconsideration of the group projects for the benefit of individual projects, such as the necessity of giving greater attention to the rehabilitation and training programs targeting women.

#### *A multi-dimensions model*

The women's unit in PARC combined agricultural extension with social issues. PARC still has a WID program that included organization building, income generation, and credit and

savings programs. Women's unit orientation has become clearer, and it sought to focus its intervention on narrowing the gap between men and women in the Palestinian rural areas, taking different social group into account. This unit formed a multi-dimensions model, including vocational training to give women the necessary technical skills to manage a project or to practice professions and specific actions. Management training, mainly directed at building women's capacities in projects management, as well as awareness and guidance were also included. These programs included many activities to raise the level of women's knowledge and encourage their active participation. It also promoted income-generating projects through small loans.

Organizing and collective learning was central to the approach. The women's unit focused on working with organized women's groups and was semi-structured in different sites as an efficient method, giving women the necessary support for daily activities. Organizing women also allowed the exchange of experiences and views and gave women a sense of power through peer interaction.

#### *A comprehensive model*

In addition to the previous models, this model has a strategic dimension, which is the establishment of women's centers. The establishment of permanent centers for women in the sites provides women the opportunity for ongoing sustainable activities. It also meets the women's strategic need of having a powerful community-based center with a clear identity. This center aims on a long-term effort to improve the status of women in the community and to activate their roles in different aspects of life particularly women's positive impact on community as a whole. This approach helps to guide PARC in its programs to serve the goal of women's empowerment, which will impact the society as a whole. PARC has been able to

develop its work in this evolutionary context, based on a set of principles including the participation of target groups, readiness for self-learning in a democratic way from their own experience, others' experiences, and also the beneficiaries of its programs. The institution's readiness to apply gender-oriented programs has also contributed to strengthening these trends.

The gender-focus program (GFP) at PARC started in 1997 in partnership with NOVIB after a comprehensive evaluation of the core program, which clarifies the need to integrate and institutionalize gender as part of PARC's policies and agenda. The GFP aimed to make PARC a gender-sensitive organization, guaranteeing and assuring equal opportunities for both men and women. GFP has been considered a tool to make structural changes in PARC including policies, program, projects, structure, procedures and systems, in addition to the knowledge, behavior and thoughts which help organize the relations between the men and women on PARC's staff. The GFP was directed by a team from various specialties and administrative levels who facilitate the monitoring and implementation of this program, therefore one of the main issues which had a major focus was developing the team members' skills and knowledge.

The development and establishment of PARC's GFP depends on developing the available internal capacities, and this helped in enlargement and strengthens knowledge within PARC, in addition it created a self-learning atmosphere as a challenge, encouraging gender team updating and enlarging gender knowledge. GFP has been focused on PARC for three years as a first step, as well as some activity targeted toward women in some of the women's clubs. In setting the objectives and outcomes of GFP, these objectives aim to achieve changes in gender relations in the field of operations as well as bringing about changes internally. It seems to be necessary but not sufficient for organizations to get internal systems right. The struggle for gender equality has to be waged equally in the field. A second important feature is that the objectives focus on both

mainstreaming gender and on women-specific activities. PARC's objectives make specific mention of recognition for women's work in the organization and provision of equal opportunities for women for training in management and administrative skills. They also encompass engendering the planning and monitoring systems and training all staff to mainstream gender in their work. At the field level, the women-specific objectives include increasing their access to resources and enhancing their presence in decision-making bodies through initiatives that focus only on women. The third feature is that PARC specifically mentions women's empowerment, which meant equal opportunity for women and men in training and promotions, equal pay for equal work, including women in decision-making and working towards a more gender-balanced staff composition. For the most part activities could be clustered as follows: training and capacity building; policy development (gender policy, recruitment and training policy etc); program development (planning, monitoring and evaluation); research (studies and baseline); organizing and strengthening women's community-based organizations; internal advocacy; and external networking on gender (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 1997)

*Union of agricultural work committees (UAWC).* As discussed in Chapter 3, UAWC was founded in 1986 as a grassroots organization initiated by a group of professional volunteers in the areas of agricultural engineering and development. UAWC's priorities during the initial stages were formulated through a policy of resistance to Israeli measures designed to cripple agricultural development and infrastructure. Staffed primarily by volunteers during the early stages of its development, UAWC organized local committees throughout the West Bank and Gaza in order to assess agricultural needs and to aid in implementation and supervision of projects and programs. As a consequence of the volunteer nature of the organization and the lack of efficient structures and policies to govern project vision and implementation, UAWC was

subject to a certain stagnation which detracted from its general efficacy; although at many levels, UAWC was successful in its originally stated goal to effect positive change in the agricultural arena. Gender issues were not central in the policies and programs of the early period.

The recent political changes and the emergence of the Palestinian National Authority, however, have precipitated UAWC to evaluate its present programs and projects, as well as its vision for the future. As a result of internal and external evaluative procedures, UAWC has recognized the need for its structures, policy, and vision to reflect this new reality. Guidelines have been implemented in the articulation of the Union's philosophy, including sustainability and community empowerment needs. Community participation and ownership will be translated into sharing in labor, materials, and, in some instances, capital. All training programs will take into consideration technical, environmental, social, and gender issues. Farmers and livestock breeders will be considered partners in all project phases and activities and will select their own representatives in the formation of cooperatives or project committees.

UAWC's mission is the commitment to facilitate sustainable agricultural development in Palestine through a democratic participatory approach to development which encompasses developing agriculture and drinking water resources and environmental protection programs, agricultural extension and training, marketing Palestinian agricultural products, land development program, and an enabling rural women program (Union of Agriculture Working Committees, 2009). Therefore UAWC's stated philosophy is based on the organization as a grass-roots, nonprofit organization; the UAWC states that people at all levels of Palestinian society must be involved in transformative action at the micro-level in order to effect beneficial change at the macro-level. To make this philosophy actionable, the Union is committed to pursuing an ongoing dialogue within various sectors of society, which encourages the sharing of



problem perceptions and solutions and which offers an opportunity for participatory action in cooperation with the Union.

UAWC has formed its priorities which focus on the integration of agricultural development as part of a comprehensive development plan for Palestine. Providing education and training for agricultural developers with special emphasis on women is a focal point of its work to improve the overall economic situation of families engaged in farming through increasing the role of women in farming enterprise. Many other issues are of immense importance such as environmental awareness among the Palestinian population, opportunities for small project initiatives and export, productive cooperation and coordination with other local and international agricultural development organizations.

UAWC has been targeting rural women in many of its recent projects, especially in areas where women are most marginalized. This is portrayed through the creation of several women's cooperatives last year and the creation of several training courses for rural women. It is also important to perceive the enrollment of women in designing and identifying women's needs, recognizing their priorities, and establishing women's committees in several areas in which UAWC executes its projects. UAWC also assists women from poor and marginalized regions to start small projects that would generate a steady income.

As for the women's cooperative in Soreef, having a food processing projects and a green house where members work, manage and market their products allows women to have a representative presence in the community. The main problem is that the cooperative lacks the sustainable social awareness programs, which will contribute more in strengthening their identity as working class women. Members of the Soreef women's cooperative are very familiar with the project and the funding organization, rather than being familiar with the UAWC vision and

mission in general; this lack of information would not allow women to develop a long term vision of community change that is related to the broader vision of UAWC.

The WID program is not an institutionalized a unit in UAWC case, while in PARC it has been institutionalized in an organization that has its own staff, executive committee and general assembly. PARC is still in the process of change from a WID approach to a GAD approach. This program aims at enhancing the roles of rural women and empowering them, while activating their social and economic roles through the different awareness campaigns and agricultural projects exclusive to women, such as establishing home gardens with their tools and equipment in certain areas.

#### *Gendering organizations/ Mainstreaming gender in organizations*

*To say that an organization, or any other analytical unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an additional to ongoing process, conceived as gender neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender relations (Acker, 1990, p.146).*

Three main guiding principles for gendering organizations are of immense importance. Ownership and sustainability; empowerment and efficiency and equity and partnership are basic elements and determinants of engendering organization (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2006, p. 13). For true equality to become a reality for women, the sharing of power on equal terms with men must become a major strategy. There is a need for women to participate fully in political process to have an equal share of power in guiding development efforts. In this regard, it is ideal to explore the Gender Focus Program (GFP) as an organizational change strategy to mainstream gender equity at PARC. GFP will provide insight to how PARC was gender responsive by looking at the establishment of policies and gender structures, the gendering of the project cycle, particularly monitoring, and organizational processes for

affirmative action including hiring and advancement of women staff. While in the case of UAWC, which does not have a gender mainstreaming strategy, women's projects and capacity-building programs will be given closer attention when analyzing the impact of UAWC's empowerment on both men and women regarding the availability of resources and decision-making process. Therefore, I have two questions: First do organizations such as PARC and UAWC establish gender policies and accountability systems such as gender aware monitoring and performance management? Second, does capacity strengthening ensure gender aware programming?

Some literature demonstrates equality between women and men as a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and also as a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace (International Planned Parenthood Federation, p. 2). A transformed partnership (Kabeer, 2005) though, based on equality between women and men, is a condition for people-driven sustainable development. Gender mainstreaming, organizational empowerment and other means of enabling women to bring their interests and preferences into the evaluation and choice of development objectives are fundamental strategies. These would include special measures designed to enhance women's autonomy to bring women into the mainstream of the development process on an equal basis with men. International experience with gender mainstreaming has, by and large, been unsuccessful. Despite some important advances, feminist aspirations for social transformation remain unfulfilled (Cornwall, Harrison, & Whitehead, 2004, p. 01).

It is important to see whether organizational change for gender equality is happening within a set of cultural and organizational norms at PARC and UAWC or if organizational change is challenging those norms both internally and in its exogenous work in society. Based on

my fieldwork in 2009-2010 and experience as a gender officer and gender consultant in these grassroots NGOs organizations, PARC and UAWC have never made explicit claims toward their role in transforming power or gender relations despite orienting themselves with social change and justice movements.

The social change process requires the efforts of more than one institution. It needs an alliance to be forged between particular development institutions and the political and social progressive forces on a national level. The subject of gender also should not be targeted to women alone. It should include different social groups and those privileged men who control most of the resources within the patriarchal system. A general director of one of these grassroots NGOs stressed the importance of targeting men.

If we are to succeed effectively in gender issues, we must target the other half, (men) who are stubborn, have the control over resources and refuse to come down from the tree. This is the biggest issue to be done by a single institution. I think it needs a national plan. This national plan must deal with the subject as an educational learning process, in order to facilitate influencing male community. They are supposed to be influenced by the process according to the follow-up system on more than one level to create awareness of this social issue... (Participant 07, personal communication, August 26, 2009).

PARC's purpose is not social transformation (Akman, 2008) or change in gender-biased institutional norms that shape families, markets, or the state. PARC has less influence on conservative religious norms that impact gender equality. A public relations officer at PARC confirmed this claim while discussing the impact of PARC's projects on women at local level:

PARC has worked more than other institutions for women. PARC has given to women a breast-feeding hour leave and paid maternity leave for a period of three months. And the institution tried to enable women to become owners of the resources for example through loans and credits. But at the end you found that the impact of the religious dimension is more powerful on women than the organization's vision and ideology. For example, you found one of the strongest women who is a leader and has benefited from projects and empowerment training, would stay in the house if her husband asked her not to participate in the organization's activities at the community level. If this woman reached the stage to reject her husband's request to stay at home and insists on participating in projects that would reflect her interests, here I can say that she has become gender aware

through the impact of PARC... (Participant 02, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

Work at PARC has been limited on key issues for organizational development from a gender perspective, such as formulating more women-friendly policies, integrating gender as a primary component in the strategic plan of the institution while reassessing all policies and procedures from that gender perspective by adopting Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) as a method for planning, monitoring and evaluation. PARC gives women in the organization certain opportunities, such as introducing special facilities for women to participate in education, training, representation of the institution in community activities. The main issues though, which are focused on transforming power structure within the organization created huge debate about main positions and remained unsolved or monitored. The director of GFP pointed out some difficulties that have been faced while mainstreaming gender at PARC:

There was a difficulty for certain issues to be achieved and institutionalized at PARC. Women's position in decision-making centers in PARC created huge debates and internal negotiation at the top management, compare to other issues that were easily integrated and that were already existed such as maternity leave, breast-feeding hour for women, and other vacations... (Participant 03, personal communication, October 11, 2009).

Culture was also a critical issue that could not be changed directly through training and education only, but needed to be built as a cumulative process continually. Change has been limited on changing the traditional stereotypes and images about rural women at the local level. Therefore considering women as partners in development process, is a very hard task without challenging the cultural barriers. A senior staff pointed out that change had never been achieved in this issue:

The subject of gender does not fit with the thought of the Palestinian rural areas. These slogans are traded only among intellectuals and are non-viable. We have religious mentality, which is not changed. We work with women and give women excellence and privileges in our projects to empower and enable them, but in the elections' time their husbands forced them to elect what they want and not what women want. This is a clear

proof of considering gender as intellectuals... (Participant 11, personal communication, November 23, 2009).

In UAWC's case, gender as a concept and as a practice has not been enforced in their cooperatives due to lack of infrastructure, internal capacity, experience, and resources. However, UAWC is willing to implement more gender aware policies and start discussing the issue and introduce their staff to more workshops in an attempt to connect gender issues to their projects in a practical training session on gender and development (project manager interview). It seems UAWC is able to address practical gender needs in conventional agricultural activities and gender strategies through their cooperatives that challenge the traditional division of labor such as green houses that are owned and managed by women and where women completely control the marketing process. Gender issues are now being addressed in project formation but not yet at the implementation level. It's still only reflected by reports and evaluations and not yet in monitoring process.

PARC still focuses on gender equality as an issue of redistribution of resources but not to recognize women and their rights as a value of their own. This implies not only the lack of transforming their programs, but also the institutional *weakness in* addressing gender justice and identity. A public relation officer was concerned about that stating:

I am not against the gender concept, but against dealing with it as a theoretical and not practical concept. Gender is a practice. It's not enough to repeat the concept only without applying it. Even the gender team in the institution who promote the concept does not implement it in their homes. She is always talking about gender and when I asked her if she agrees to let her daughter to travel abroad, she was against the idea, although she allowed her son to travel... (Participant 02, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

A project manager was also cautious about increasing the gender sensitivity in writing more gender-oriented projects:

There is a proportion of capacity building and infrastructure projects in most of the programs in PARC. We have to focus on the presence and participation of women, where

they should be represented and capable. For example, we write our projects to be gender sensitive on the ground. So you couldn't find a project designed without having at least 20% of the activities of targeted women's ability to receive... (Participant 12, personal communication, November 23, 2009).

Jahan (1995, p. 13) differentiates between two gender mainstreaming approaches: one that integrates gender concerns within the existing development approaches (integrationist) and one that transforms 'the existing development agenda with a gender perspective' (agenda-setting). Jahan's (1995, p. 13) typology is useful in revealing how organizations actually understand gender mainstreaming, especially as most have not conceived it as an agenda-setting factor. Therefore mainstreaming is not only about institutionalizing gender concerns in policies and programs, but also requires addressing gender issues within organizations themselves. The advantage of a gender mainstreaming approach is that it allows for the advancement of gender equality and equity regardless of whether it is women or men who are disadvantaged and whose position needs to be addressed. Therefore NGOs such as PARC and UAWC both reflected societal gender roles and relations and reproduced them in their projects and programs. A director of projects' department highlighted the difficulty to change and challenge gender norms in society:

In our interventions we are doing what we can to empower women to reach the decision-making centers, but without jumping on the reality. In my village, if a woman demands her right to inheritance, despite being legal, society will accuse her that she took her brothers' property. If we keep working against these norms a hundred years ahead, we will remain as one who breaks the rock... (Participant 12, personal communication, November 23, 2009).

If the feminist vision is to make organizations more democratic and supportive of humane goals, then it is important to understand the social construction of gender by organizations in order to challenge gender inequalities (Ahmed, 2003). As Goetz (2001) explains, notions of gender equality are profoundly counter-cultural in many societies, North and

South. How, then, do development grassroots NGOs like PARC and UAWC and those who working in them change their perceptions about women's entitlements and capabilities and begin to champion women's right to equality?

Since NGOs have some degree of autonomy from patriarchal structures and play an important role in renegotiating gender relations through struggles for social justice and gender equity, they can also be seen as 'en-gendering' organizations (Murthy, 1998, p. 204). Therefore PARC and UAWC must be change-agents while their mission and vision are driven by social justice and equity. Lourdes (Llongwe, 1997) contends: How can we expect organizations to transform themselves from within patriarchy and male privilege? Resistance to change, either through outright defiance or by more subtle means of cooperation, results in the evaporation of well-meaning policies.

For gender advocates, the objectives of organizational change are to achieve equality, whereas in a mainstream organizational development, equality and equity are instrumental to achieving organizational effectiveness. A program director commented:

Gender sensitivity means that the overall our projects design, I realize that the technological capabilities of women is simple and therefore we try to commensurate the used technology with their abilities and here we talk about home gardens. There is no barrier that could hinder women with the women-owned capacity to benefit from our projects... (Participant 05, personal communication, September 02, 2009).

As a result gender policies are established in development grassroots NGOs but not implemented for a number of reasons such as resistance to change, desire for the preservation of male privilege, poor policy formulation, insufficient leadership and commitment, lack of subsequent plans guiding implementation, lack of experience, and limited resources particularly financial and human.



PARC maintains a gender balance on its Board and Core Group and has improved the ratio of women and men on its Executive Board. PARC has succeeded in hiring qualified women in senior positions, as it continues to increase the number of women staff in all sectors including at higher levels of the organization. PARC also has its own women friendly policies concerning higher education and paid maternity leave. A projects department director was concerned about the importance of women's participation and *representation* at *decision-making* levels:

Not less than 30% of members of the general assembly are women in PARC. The general assembly is the highest legislative authority in the organization. Women practice the available role to them or anything else in a decision-making process. Board of Directors is the executive body of the General assembly. President and Vice-President of this body in the new elected council, which was elected a month ago, are women one from Gaza Strip and the second from Nablus. They are in the highest executive authority in the organization. There are currently 2 out of 3 directors of the programs of operational capacity-building program, savings and Credit who are part of the central work and control executive management of the institution at least... (Participant 04, personal communication, September 02, 2009).

No doubt PARC has an obvious affect on gender issues through women's clubs, and savings and credit programs. We can talk here specifically about the organizational practice through various projects and interventions. Approximately 65% of the beneficiaries are women (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 2008). Most of the interventions of the institution are tools for women to enable them to control at least partially the sources, or even to access it. For example, savings and credit programs provide an opportunity for women to gain access to important resources, control them and to make decisions about them. Considering that women are an essential and positive factor to sustain and promote ownership of the service, giving women the ability to maintain property and resources long denied by the patriarchal culture will ensure enhanced stewardship.

There are several factors that inhibit the possibility of achieving the desired change as a result of these interventions and projects. Lack of political will and leadership, lack of stability in terms of their position within the organization are fundamental factors. There are also other essential factors such as; human resources and finances; and inadequate accountability and data collection. Monitoring mechanisms as well as poor coordination within government and with civil society are important factors in this regard. The head of capacity building department was concerned about gender auditing *as a tool* for rendering policy-makers responsible for the *gender* impact of organization's policies:

The need to hold workshops for staff in PARC is required, so they can understand different development concepts including gender. Gender trend is still just a gender initiative of people who work on the subject in the organization. Therefore to say that the organization succeeded or failed in this subject, a set of gender indicators must be developed by the organization, so it can audit work on the topic of gender. Accordingly, this will give the organization room for improvement projects and re-design them. This analytical approach is still does not exist in the organization... (Participant 03, personal communication, October 11, 2009).

Although UAWC has a clear policy and development programs and projects aimed at empowering women economically providing them access to agricultural and natural resources, the idea of establishment women's unit to endorse women's empowerment remain at the margins of the organization. With little access to power and decision-making, limited authority, insufficient human and financial resources and overall lack of capacity- whilst often being saddled with the explicit or implicit responsibility for mainstreaming gender in the entire organization and its programs.

The objective of gender mainstreaming was to promote gender equality through organizational change in non-governmental development organizations, especially by those organizations like PARC whose mission and mandate are to promote social justice and equality.

### *Gender Mainstreaming As A Learning Process*

The concept of “learning organization” (McHugh, Groves, & Alker, 1998) received great attention from scholars in different fields in social sciences. The concept as defined by Kelleher (2002) emphasizing organizations that are mission-driven and have evolved to best meet a mission within their own particular dynamic context. Therefore staff at these organizations should be empowered to maximize their potential and contribute to both the operational and strategic levels. Teamwork and the need to break down functional barriers within an organization are central tenets. The organizational culture is one that values experimentation, risk-taking, and learning in order to breed innovation (i.e. knowledge for action). Organizations are sensitive to, and have strategic linkages with, the external context, combined with built-in flexibility, allowing them to thrive in a dynamic environment.

PARC went through the common steps set out in the planning process that involved making a gender self-diagnosis of the structure, culture and relationships of the organization using the nine box tool. This process led to an action plan designed to address the specific needs of the organization concerned. This diagnosis might provide insight on how the contradictions between gender equality and organizational development can be managed in grassroots NGOs. This examines how PARC treated gender equality prior to their participating in the GFP, so as to establish baseline against which to assess the change agenda and the actual changes. What efforts had been put in to including women in the workplace? Did PARC see this as a need? How many women and men were there in this organization and how were they placed in terms of status and decision-making power? PARC tried to make the planning exercise a participatory learning and inclusive one to create ownership of the process and accountability. Building ownership for the difficult and politically sensitive project of bringing about organizational change to promote

gender equality was a central objective of the planning stage. Therefore there was in-depth study of the decision to establish an object or a team within the organization to follow up the work of the gender institutionalization within the organization. A member in a gender team states:

At first it was thought in the establishment of a gender unit, but this may help to isolate the concept of being integrated in the organization naturally. That is why there was a wise decision from the top management to establish a gender team, so to include different levels of the organization starting from the top management, the medium and field staff. This actually is meant to keep the concept is not restricted to a group or a certain management level or a specific unit, and help to integrate the concept effectively. Therefore gender mainstreaming would be the responsibility of all levels in PARC... (Participant 04, personal communication, September 02, 2009).

This was extremely important in order to minimize resistance and tension. This tension and resistance manifested in several ways ranging from outright questioning of the need for such an exercise, to labeling gender concepts as “western” and therefore not applicable, out of an implicit fear that feminism was being introduced “through the back door.” The involvement at all levels of staff in the self-diagnosis and planning exercise helped to build the capacity to undertake total organizational analysis.

PARC used training forums as a way to open up a debate about gender issues. Gender training was conducted by those who knew the organization in order to counteract allegations that gender orientation was a foreign import and donor imposed agenda. This gave rise to debate about the concept of gender equality and discussion which kept the issue alive. Therefore the success and failure of measures to equalize the relationship between women and men in the organization is dependent on keeping the debate alive and focused on principles of justice... (Participant 03, personal communication, October 11, 2009).

In earlier writings about organizational learning, Abbey-Livingston & Kelleher (1988) and Kelleher & McLaren (1996) have also highlighted the importance of power, the nature of knowledge, and paradoxical action. Kelleher (2002, p. 4) notes that organizational learning, an off-shoot of Organizational Development, ‘has never claimed to be about transforming power or gender relations....it leaves the authority structure intact.’ PARC has a commitment to gender

equality and actual efforts to promote women's development and empowerment, but yet there was a lack of clarity about what was meant by gender equality, how it was to be achieved and measured. One of the top management officials at PARC has contradictions clarifying gender concept and its impact on the rural communities...

We must create awareness around gender issues. And if we stay focused on only women, I would say that we will not succeed as required. There are successes, but many times there are negative effects of this excess empowerment, and especially in this form of injections. This creates a kind of reactions to the other party since there is a lack of work in this issue with men. This will contribute to break relationship between men and women and thus affects the social fabric and creates a kind of dislocation and instability. Economic relations in the Palestinian rural areas are different. Men and women work together and share these resources... (Participant 01, personal communication, September 14, 2009).

There is a need for the localization and settlement of the concept and therefore it becomes easier to understand within the Palestinian context especially that the word gender is essentially not an Arabic word. Hence the integration of the concept at the institutional or community level will become easier and stems from the societal necessity. This will facilitate promoting the concept as a local necessity. The term gender is fraught with challenges. In the English language gender is not well understood beyond academics and feminist activists, and different people can make very different interpretations of the term (Moghadam, 1995) but when translated into Arabic the problem become greater. There is no one conventional translation, and often the anglicised term *genderiyeh* is used. Others advocate the term *nuah ijtimayyeh* (which roughly translates to English as social group) however, this is highly unsatisfactory as it can easily confuse gender with other social groups.

This highlights the importance of political analysis and action within the organization in order to increase and strengthen ideas that further equality and then translate the ideas into policies, programs, and practices. Kelleher (2002) points out that many of the organizations

would not meet the definition of learning organizations and yet much learning is happening, therefore many scholars no longer use the phrase learning organization because it has become a broad term, and rather like saying “doing organizations”. It’s important to ask what it is that “learning organization” is learning in PARC and UAWC in terms of gender. Is this learning happening within a set of cultural and organizational norms, or is it challenging those norms both internally and in its work in the society? Who was part of this learning process, and who was excluded? Many have written about the importance of empowerment, participation, and team works as key factors in organizational change. A gender Focus Program member added:

PARC exposed all levels of staff to gender awareness training. The final evaluation found that staff articulated their experiences in different ways. Some articulated their internalization of gender-sensitivity at the personal level (self-change), while others reflected on gender relations in terms of changes in the community or at the organizational level. These training programs contributed to openness about gender issues and created reciprocity and respect amongst women and men staff... (Participant 04, personal communication, September 02, 2009).

The Gender Focus Program was directed by a team from various specialties and administrative levels who facilitated the monitoring and implementation of this program, therefore one of the main issues which had a major focus was developing the team members’ skills and knowledge.

### *Renegotiating Gender Identity*

*The substantive level: reaching a shared vision for gender equity.* The substantive level of an NGO, as defined in its vision or mission statement, reflects its perspective on gender relations and social change. The Beijing Platform of Action views it as a means of achieving gender equality by putting women and ‘gender’ at the center stage of development organizations’ priorities. While for many gender mainstreaming advocates, the notion of gender mainstreaming is related to transformation (Acker, 1990). In this respect, Kabeer’s (1994) typology of gender policies is a useful tool to distinguish between different organizational policy approaches,

namely: gender blind policies that reinforce or perpetuate gender hierarchies; gender neutral policies which is not only mean to be more efficient, but it further perpetuates the social construction of women as ‘natural career; gender –ameliorative policies; and gender-transformative or redistributive policies.

In order to broad base the responsibility for gender awareness change and mainstreaming in PARC, a Gender Steering Committee was set up comprising six members who were managers from different departments including the Rural Women Development, Extension and Land Development(the largest and most powerful), and Public Relation. PARC is a large organization, and in order to ensure adequate spread throughout the organization, staffs were drawn from different sections of the organization and formed into teams with specific responsibility: gender training, production of newsletter, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 1999).

The analysis of the organizational self-diagnosis undertaken shows patterns of strengths and weaknesses. PARC identified their strengths in the political and cultural layers and their weaknesses in the technical layer. They mean by political layer is strong that management is open to change and committed to gender equality and social justice issues. They also mean that the mission and mandate of the organization is supportive of equality and social justice issues and thus provides legitimacy for promoting gender equality. As for the cultural layer being strength, it shows that the staff working in the organization is open-minded and dedicated and willing to share information and learn. While the weaknesses in the technical layer are seen to be a lack of gender policy, lack of adequate planning monitoring and evaluation systems, poorly distributed tasks and responsibilities and lack of in-house expertise to undertake gender and development work.

An analysis of PARC's action plan using the nine-box tool (Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees, 1996), showed that most change activities were concentrated in the technical layer. By focusing on the technical aspects of change, PARC was dealing primarily with the tangible and visible aspects or the "hardware of the organization" (Kelleher, 2002). The 'software', on the other hand, comprising those aspects of change that are least visible and most resistant- namely ideas, practices and behavior that perpetuate gender inequality- was not being addressed. In fact there was resounding silence about the entrenched and pervasive culture of gender inequality in the organizations and what the organizations planned to do to change. The proposed change model that was used by PARC signified the disappearance of those aspects of change that are most necessary to transform gender relations. Therefore it would fail to address the power structures in the organization or the attitude and working culture of its staff. With this initial approach I can say that the resulting changes and organizational development would be cosmetic.

An initial activity of the GFP was to prepare an operational plan for the GFP. A number of workshops were conducted with the participation of PARC's staff in the regions, gender team and target groups from both sexes to design the activities for the operational plan. Participatory Rapid Appraisal methods were used to identify the needs and interests of target communities. This exercise helped to involve staff of the mainstream departments in learning about gender analysis and owning the plan that was prepared as a result. This carried into other planning exercises with the result that gender analysis was integrated into PARC strategic plan (Palestinian Agriculture relief Committees, 1997c). Besides involving staff in undertaking a gender analysis in the context of planning, gender awareness workshops were conducted for all levels of staff, so these training programs encouraged staff to express their views and did not



prevent anybody from expressing different opinions about the concept of gender equality even if they don't agree. This gave rise to a debate that was allowed to evolve.

Since the end of Gender Focus Programme, PARC has adopted a strategy involving both the Rural Women's Development and Rural Women's Development Society (RWDS). The later was established in 2001 as an independent affiliated organization, and is as a federation of the earlier Women's Clubs. Both provide services while at the same time maintaining a focus on women's empowerment. The rural women's development department focuses on women's social empowerment by enhancing their role and status in rural communities, such as raising awareness for more women in decision making bodies and supporting women candidates in village council elections. The department also supports women's saving and credits cooperatives. The RWDS evolved from PARC's experience in supporting women's clubs, as described previously. PARC fostered the establishment of RWDS to provide a separate and distinct vehicle to promote women's political standing, for this was not possible within the confines of gender mainstreaming within the current structure and politics of PARC. RWDS focuses on capacity building, establishment of women's centers, advocacy, lobbying and networking as well as on income generation projects, food security, the girls and women's education. While service provision includes more conventional activities, capacity building initiative includes legal literacy and women's empowerment and leadership.

RWDS also provides educational upgrading and advocates for the inclusion of women's agriculture work as paid work and in the calculation of Palestinian gross domestic product, saving and credits program. Although the Rural Women's Development Society (RWDS) in PARC support the establishment of women's clubs in communities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1996 as a sustainable way of organizing rural women around their strategic

and practical needs, the clubs are yet the implementing body of RWDS' programs and activities which target rural women for enhancing their livelihoods, rather than as a representative body to bargain power within the household, and position within the community. Most of the activities and projects in Saida women's club which is one of the strongest clubs as mentioned by PARC's staff are focused mainly on practical gender needs which are well received by local community, rather than strategic needs that could be a tool of long term social change around the women's status in the community.

Although PARC has a commitment to gender equality and actual efforts to promote women's development and empowerment, but yet there was a lack of clarity about what was meant by gender equality, how it was to be achieved and measured. A program director adds:

Gender sensitivity means that in our overall projects design, I realize that the technological capabilities of women are simple and therefore trying to commensurate the used technology with their abilities and here we talk about home gardens. There is no barrier that could hinder women with the women-owned capacity to benefit from our projects... (Participant 05, personal communication, September 01, 2009).

Thus for example, PARC addressed its core programs in agricultural development, which included extension support, crop production, and animal husbandry, to men while food processing and household economy programs targeted women. Therefore the organization mission did not reflect conscious concerns about gender equality at the organization and program level. In its organization of women in self-help groups such as savings group, PARC has moved beyond a gender –ameliorative intervention to look at other aspects of social change (e.g. challenging dominance of the traditional money-lender. In so doing PARC is trying to address strategic gender interests (e.g. women access to, and control over resources such as credit). PARC seeks to strengthen gender equity in development practice. The question remains as to whether PARC has the capacity to sustain and strengthen this process of transformatory change

in the long term. A credit and saving coordinator pointed out some barriers to achieve this long term vision saying:

We form savings and credit program for women and especially women that do not have own income through a job or business. The program also provides an opportunity for women to obtain small loans to start small projects for income generation. Unfortunately, the program could not achieve this vision, since most women take their income from men and are thus became a mediator for the men to obtain loans that meet practical needs, such as building, buy a car for the husband, a son's marriage and therefore cannot take a loan for a production process creating revenue for sustainable income for the family... (Participant 33, personal communication, December 03, 2009).

Three of the GFP objectives in PARC addressed the political dimensions of gender relations and were formulated as: the work of women is given full recognition, women's access to resources increased and more women became involved in decision-making.

UAWC on the other hand has a clear policy and clear focus on women's empowerment through different projects. These efforts are not yet institutionalized in a unit. Their strategic plan stated the importance to target women in different activities and mainly economic empowerment. One main strategic goal of UAWC focuses on the empowerment of rural women. This goal is implemented through a program that includes training and educating women in the areas of agricultural and non-agricultural, and providing the necessary inputs for the management of small income-generating projects. This has been promoted through two main strategies such as environmental and agricultural awareness to the Palestinian women and promoting economic and social role of Palestinian women through awareness campaigns and special agricultural projects for women. This process of women's empowerment involves making changes so that women can individually exercise more control over resources such as the food processing cooperative, access markets. Yet it lacks a process of women becoming aware of their 'power within' which stems from a growing analysis and awareness of the roots of their subordination, and self-confidence that this situation can be changed and challenged via political action. So women's

empowerment is understood as Murthy (2004) emphasizes as a process of exposing the oppressive power of existing gender relations, critically challenging them, and creatively trying to shape alternative ones. This alternative socio-economic context would be developed through gender strategic interests and needs.

Molyneux (1985) described how women have some common interests, but that no consensus exists. She suggested the existence of practical and strategic interests, each of which develops in a different way. UAWC's development policies and projects require implementing a gender analysis that can be used to understand strategic gender needs and thus to address the problems of women's subordination. Strategic gender interests arise because of the exclusion of women from the main sources of power, privilege and prestige within their societies and ideological construction of exclusion as biologically determined, divinely ordained or rationally and voluntarily chose. They are deep rooted in the consciousness of both men and women. (Kabeer, 1994, p. 91)

*The structural level: translating gender equity concerns into actions.* Grassroots NGOs, while concerning itself with change (even at deep level) has never claimed to be about transforming power or gender relations. They have been advanced as a more effective response to the problem of changes. Its purpose is not social transformation or change in gender based institutional norms that shape families, market, or even the state. Gender is not just about women and men, but about their power relations (Kabeer, 1994). The relational analysis of gender inequalities within the development process has far reaching implications. It goes beyond the questions of male prejudice and perceptions . . . to looking at the institutionalized basis of male power and privilege (Kabeer, 1994, p. xii). This gender relations approach shifts the focus away

from concentrating on women only who implied that the problem and solution is confined to women.

Consequently making change happen requires more than changing the rules. It requires a culture of compliance to the rules, which in turn means a culture of accountability (Kelleher, 2002). Accountability for gender equality is unlike other forms of accountability, such as financial accountability which is widely accepted and therefore a legitimate form for accountability, where everybody working in an organizational set up to account for the use of money. It is different than accountability for gender equality, because the desire for gender equality is not widely shared, nor is it part of the widely held values of working in an organization.

Although these organizations advocate for wide participation and involvement of staff at all level, they leave the authority structure intact (Kelleher, 2002). This could be not necessarily a bad thing on a day-to-day basis, but changing gender relations demands that we think differently about organizations and hierarchies and consider organizational forms with more accountability to clients, staff, and beneficiaries. Some of these organizations have made considerable progress with this, but not by reading organizational learning texts.

These organizations don't focus on key elements of importance to gender equality. In this regard culture is the common experiences and ideas that are threaded through all social practices in a specific society and at any given moment in time. It is in this sense that the term culture will be used in examining the practice of organizational change to promote gender equality. This is because organizational culture to promote gender equality is composed of common experiences/ ideas informing practice, including the meanings and definitions of what it is to be a women or a

man, and what constitutes their relationship, claims and entitlements (Mukhopadhyay, Steehourwer & Wong, 2006).

Is changing happening within a set of cultural and organizational norms, or is it challenging those norms both internally and in its work in the communities? In order to understand this gender bias in the very fabric of organizations, we turn to the question of institutional change.

Significant progress towards gender equality could be made only by changing institutions and gender bias institutional norms. Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996) pointed out that we understood institutions as the framework of rules for achieving social or economic ends. These rules specify how resources are allocated and how tasks, responsibilities, and value are assigned- in other words, who gets what, who does what, and who gets to decide. Thus social structures which operate within these organizations act either to reinforce the rules or to challenge them. This includes not only how the organizations function internally (the number of women managers, for example) but how it conceives of its mission and whether it delivers services and programs in a way that challenges gender norms.

PARC identified the political and cultural layers of their organization as being their strong point. PARC scored the policy influence box (in the political layer) highly because the management was supportive of gender equality. The room for manoeuvre box (political layer) was rated equally strong because there was space for the women's unit to organize and for diversity as represented by needs and interests of women finding a place in PARC. The reasons given by organizations for considering the political layer as being strong revolve around two issues. The first is the role of a supportive management in pushing a gender equality agenda. The

second is the space given to women to be organized within the organization. The reasons for identifying the cultural layer as being strong are very similar in the case of PARC.

PARC diagnosed the tasks and responsibilities box as the weakest because the coordination between departments on gender issues was poor; the management information system didn't capture the progress or lack thereof on gender issues; tasks and responsibilities were not defined and staff were not made accountable for gender performance.

Institution is still not held accountable on gender issues in the annual evaluation of staff's. Although the institution considers gender as belief and practice, but there are still individuals don't believe on gender. Therefore it's possible to rearrange gender criteria while evaluating staff, because the issue of gender is an institutionalized policy and not an individual choice. Thus we're working to add gender as a component of staff appraisal... (Participant 07, personal communication, August 27, 2009).

So no matter how radically structures and systems maybe reform, and no matter how progressive the organization vision and mission statement state and shape the commitment to social justice and equality, if organizational culture is unchanged, the change will remain superficial and ultimately without any effect. Gender mainstreaming as an organizational learning process is not intended to mean furthering a gender-equality agenda, but structural change to become more gender equitable organizations. PARC as change agents may recognize that gender equality requires a very different set of power relations in the organization. Its efforts to move the organization towards being somewhat more equitable, perhaps a more democratic and more accountable organization, still requires PARC to see the change process as political process, instead of being seen as organizational one. Looking at gendered structures and practices necessitates an analysis of time and space within organizations, as well as recruitment procedures, promotion policies, the allocation of tasks and responsibilities, the distribution of resources, and patterns of decision making as Acker (1992) argues. There are always differences between our goals as change agents, what is possible in a given situation, and what organizations

want when they seek to become more gender equitable. Social transformation in organizations can be de-railed at the structural level – verbal and paper commitments to a vision of gender have a tendency to ‘evaporate’ when there is resistance to putting policy into practice through the procedures, mechanisms, and the rules of the organizations. (Sweetman, 1997, p. 5) A senior staff who is working at savings and credits program adds

I doubt that the organization is able to enforce its vision of progressive thoughts and social justice and equality thoughts for all workers, and thus the organization become alienated with progressive ideology. I am as an employee; more often become projects implementer than of being a believer in this program and its vision and thus the progressive vision about women’s emancipation and equality will disappear. Staff in the organization is non-believer and non-mobilize around the organization progressive vision. This is one of our organization weaknesses... (Participant 33, personal communication, December 03, 2009).

#### *Conclusions: Towards Gender-Sensitive Organizational Practices*

The analysis of gender within the NGOs, PARC and UAWC, reveals that as organizations, they are committed to gender equity and social justice at the substantive level, in terms of their mission and their overall goals and policies. However, at the structural level, this process of social transformation still doesn’t reach the changes they seek to achieve due to constraints, such as, project-oriented approach and social barriers underlying gender discriminations. These constraints make it difficult to translate gender equity concerns into sustainable initiative.

Heterogeneous perspectives exist in NGOs about gender issues. Male and female staff members tend to accept a gender perspective for two reasons: their political commitment to social justice that is based on their leftist background as practitioners and as policy makers, and because they have seen the potential role that rural women can play as agents of change. While most of professional technical practitioners have the opposite perspective and don’t have the



same commitment to gender equity, but rather as a technical solution for enhancing project output based on strengthening women's participation like WID approach does.

Staff members of NGOs need to be exposed to knowledge, tools, techniques and more importantly, collective support to promote gender awareness in relations to their roles and responsibilities. Grassroots NGOs are still lacking a commitment to social change and transformation (various matters such as inheritance rights and land ownership are still not in their top priorities).

Although the reassessment of women's and men's roles is the first step towards challenging gender inequality, NGOs don't mainstream men in this process. Most of the staff still considers gender issues as women's issues, rather than as development and societal issues. They equate gender with women, rather than understand the social construction of gender relations. The need to redistribute roles and responsibilities is of immense importance in order to erase the women's burden and the stereotypical stigma that comes with being a stay at home housewife; men will share equally in domestic, parenting, and caring activities in their households.

NGOs still don't have clear policies and strategies on how women's immediate practical gender needs can be met alongside more transformative work to raise women's awareness of gender inequalities. Grassroots NGOs have adopted a commitment to gender mainstreaming without knowledge and understanding of power relations to challenge gender inequalities. NGOs are still somehow project oriented and therefore they are more compromising than challenging patriarchal structures at the community level. Lack of gender-oriented criteria in recruiting new staff is an essential and deterrent factor in this regard. Gender mainstreaming or gender sensitive development work is very dependent on NGOs staff as agents of change. While most

staff members involved in these NGOs have undergone gender training, it does not seem to be a good strategy for bringing about change. Instead, conscious effort must be made to change NGOs structures and practices. Most staff and practitioners in these NGOs don't see gender as a priority, but rather as a donor-driven aspect.

Sustainability of gender-sensitivity development can hardly be maintained due to annual rotation, staff change (turn out), financial commitment, and political environment. Its clear existence is only in documents and projects than as debates that could create the organizational change around gender identity. Gender inequalities need to be challenged to enable women to participate equally with men; however, redistributing power in social relations and challenging male privileges in economic, social, political, and cultural life is a long and difficult process. It needs more commitment by creating alliance with all progressive, like-minded factions such as, social groups, women's movement, and political forces.

Changing attitudes and minds at the organizational level is essential; it's the most fundamental level at which transformation needs to take place since it touches on the beliefs and value systems of individuals. No matter how radical organization's structures and systems may be reformed, if organizational culture is unchanged, the changes will remain superficial, cosmetic, and ultimately without effect. People do not leave their culturally-defined gender perspectives and attitudes at the gates of organizations, they enter with them. This has a significant bearing on the organization's own gender perspective.

A strong leadership of an organization, as well as articulated gender-sensitive women and men, play an important role in developing an appropriate value system for the organization. Gender training for all staff is one method increasingly used by NGOs to facilitate such institutional change, empower women staff, and redefine the power of men within the

organization. However, training can't be seen as an end in itself but needs to be part of a wider process that includes the creation of space within NGOs for staff members to share experiences and reinforce their learning, as well as, network within other organizations that have similar concerns.

Development of a gender perspective, policies, and culture in these NGOs is only reflected at the level of organizational change, but not equally in its accountability to its CBOs at the community level and advocacy efforts towards more gender-sensitive policies at the national level. NGOs are still struggling to localize the gender concept at both organizational and community levels, so staff, target groups, and partners in their CBOs will begin to own the concept. This is also due to an individual's social background, education, work experience, length of time with the organizations, and his or her expectation from gender training workshops.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

### *Service Provision as Progressive Community Change?*

The main research question of this project – *what is the extent to which delivery of services can lead to progressive community change* – has provided a multilayered assessment of the roles NGOs play in local level community development outcomes. The study shows that Palestinian grassroots NGOs have actively performed an essential role in the agriculture, health and education sectors delivering economic and social services to the poor and marginalized communities in West Bank and Gaza Strip. Grassroots NGOs such as PARC and UAWC developed a reputation for effectiveness in areas where governmental organizations were weak: in their ability to respond to local conditions and local initiatives, as well as to promote local participation; in their ability to reach the poor and marginalized people; and in their ability to maintain political independence, popular credibility and acceptance. From this perspective, they are an integral part of a flourishing civil society and make many positive contributions through their programs and projects in order to build on the resilience of the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, there are cordial motivations and good intentions of NGOs leaders, professionals and activist practitioners in these NGOs who are working hard to serve their communities and trying to enhance the political, economic and social situations to make their communities better. Good intentions though are not enough. The colonial situation that exists in Palestine is decisive and touches all aspects of life. Therefore a constructive, critical dialogue is not just important, but is a topic relevant for the survival of the Palestinian diaspora.

### *The Stifling Externality: The Donor Trap*

The element we have to assess is how social systems in which the Palestinian conflict is embedded impact social action. To presume Palestinians generally operate with relative agency is folly. The Israeli occupation colors every aspect of Palestinian life through a number of

acquiescence-building mechanisms, making the Israeli and international variables an important factor in understanding any action situation within the Palestinian context; the engagement of Western donor agencies with Palestinian NGOs remained a critical and decisive factor to understand the role of NGOs throughout this research project. *So what is the influence of the overarching political structure?*

This study looks critically at the donor impact through the engagement of donor agencies with grassroots NGOs and how such donor relationships shift the political orientation of NGOs and therefore alter their orientation toward community change, bringing them more in line with the interests of the donors. The additional research questions related to the donor dynamic were as followed: *What are the processes by which community change is co-opted and how does that impact progressive community change? What are the dilemmas of cooptation facing an organization in pursuing goals of progressive community change?*

The grassroots NGOs considered as an important component the promotion of certain values and principles to better address their local constituencies. But functionally, what is it that donors do to impact the ideological orientation of Palestinian grassroots NGOs, to encourage systemic acquiescence? These grassroots NGOs lacked a clear ideology and thus a clear project of their own among the poorest population. External donor funding encourages NGOs to implement projects, competing with and differentiating from the state on delivering services rather than deepening their connections through coordination with their own grassroots, which was diminished by the de-politicization. The relationships between NGOs and their base did not develop as, nor have managed to become, organic (Shivji, 2007), but remain at best that of benefactors and beneficiaries. A genuine activism was not developed. NGOs must fundamentally re-examine their acquiescences and discourses if they truly to play a role as a catalysts of change

rather than catalysts of aid and therefore to their expressed stand for community progressive change.

The acquiescences and discourses of these organizations shape the orientation of grassroots NGOs and as a result inform the performance and roles of practitioners in these NGOs. Accordingly two different operating rationales or frameworks evolve in which the community development practitioner's work can be identified in these grassroots NGOs: the professional and the activist. Each framework is linked to or influences the practitioners' orientation and therefore the community development efforts in different ways. The professional framework is constructed around two normative principles that assure the professional orientation of their best practices such as transparency, the beneficial criteria for selecting the sites and the principles of nationalist commitment to assure the steadfast of Palestinian on their land to serve the communities by providing services based on different projects. Conversely, the activist framework is built on intervention based on principles of social rights, social justice and social equality and redistribution, or more specifically to change the political social systems. Formal equality is manifested in structural features such as standardized rules and procedures and the standardization of criteria and quality of services through certain professional standards and manuals. The extent to which these principles are applied varies according to socio-political context and thus varies in creating the progressive community change.

Despite the best intention of the practitioners and the designated partisan, ideological and grassroots alignment, the donor's linkages have the capacity to shift the outcomes and thus change the orientation of these grassroots NGOs, even when the donors are partly supportive of an activist agenda. What initially looks like a mutually-oriented partnership quickly becomes a

relationship of power differentials. Outcomes are more professional and less grassroots-oriented, yet not necessarily in line with the explicitly expressed functions and intentions of these NGOs.

Most significant is the number of challenges these NGOs face, particularly from the heavy external role of international donor community and the linkages to the Palestinian political movement. While there is no doubt that donor relationships have proven beneficial in certain instances, a great deal of this funding is politically motivated and thus lacks a neutral agenda. These factors influence NGOs' roles and have an important impact on the ideological orientation of grassroots NGOs.

Ideology remained an important factor throughout this empirical research project. I purposefully chose left-leaning development organizations as opposed to their right-wing counterparts. This is not to say that right-leaning political ideologies have nothing to contribute, but that in terms of the Palestinian context, leftist ideologies stress liberation from institutionalized oppression.<sup>6</sup> The status quo of occupation, hierarchical oppression, and state-sponsored privilege is at the core of the Palestinian struggle. However, the status quo is not *just* being propped up by the donor community; the status quo *is* central to some parts of the donor community.

Neoliberal actors, in an effort to maintain an order more favorable to their aims –their aims centering on promotion of efficient, corporate-oriented free markets - utilize a number of tools to promote acquiescence. We can see how the allocation of donor funds serves neoliberal purposes by co-opting left-leaning ideologies through the support of technical assistance-based community development, which does little to challenge existing power structures. In doing so,

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<sup>6</sup>The origin of the left versus right political dichotomy is rooted in revolutionary France where the Parliament was comprised of monarchists and proponents of the status quo who physically sat on the right, and anarchists, communists and advocates of social change who sat together on the left.

the purpose or voice of these NGOs is minimized, limiting the political friction necessary to challenge the Israeli occupation.

#### *Organization: The Service Orientation*

Different perspectives on the principles guiding the efforts within these grassroots NGOs were both altered and in some instances created by the donor influence in an attempt to promote professionalization and depoliticization. Consequently, this creates heterogenic NGOs, comprised of actors with conflicting ideologies from leftist to rightist, muddling the institutional ideology. Coupled with vague mission statements and broad ranging strategic plans, this makes for an institution with a number of structural flaws ripe for manipulation by extra-community actors for ends that fail to address the linked dependency mechanisms tying Palestinian communities inextricably to the Israeli occupation.

*How does the organization's structure influence progressive community change?* The two NGOs in question have structurally reoriented their change perspective due in no small part to the donor influence. This has then resulted in an institution without a clear ideological orientation. The NGOs staff appears to fall into different categories. One category consists of radical employees who are still involved with the organization's political party and therefore have an explicit vision for progressive change; these people were responsible for the founding of these NGOs in a terrain of struggle for transformation. The second category is the well-intended staff who are professional and morally driven by NGOs' mission statements and a set of abstracted principles in NGOs' plans.

#### *Practitioners*

Practitioners are constrained more heavily because of the institutional failure of clarifying the community practices orientation that is embedded within the social change framework, while



providing services through the implementation of different projects and programs at the community level. Therefore, two frameworks were identified in these grassroots NGOs, which contextualize practitioners' roles. The first one is the activist framework, which is embedded within the social change orientation, while the second one is the professional framework, which is deeply entrenched with technical criteria. Accordingly, a set of values guide the practitioner's practices, divided into two different categories that revealed two different orientations: the professional orientation that is guided by transparency and empowerment, while the activists' orientation endorses the values of social justice, equality and democracy. In a sense, there is a battle over the heart and soul of the practitioners, a growing tension between ideals and technocratic pressures.

A constant concern was expressed by community development practitioners about how to deal with the inconsistent requirements of their work and the shifting context in which they work. Many practitioners have been trying to make sense of the daily dilemmas arising out of contradictory aims and practices in their grassroots NGOs. For example, on one hand, community development practitioners are told that community development requires change and creativity, while on the other hand they are required to use bureaucratically administrative procedures. These practitioners deviated their attention from social structural change to excessive time on paperwork, whether it is in terms of financial reporting requirements for funders, or reports and forms as part of democratic accountability procedures required by organizations and international aid agencies.

The professionalization of community development work also impacts significantly upon community development practitioners. In practice there is a strong "credentialist creep" favoring those with formal education qualifications based on professional skills, rather than the grassroots

orientation. In fact increasingly international community development programs, particularly those involved in international aid, have developed highly paid business professionals whose role is to fundraise rather than undertake community development practices. It is important to understand the framework that those practitioners in these organizations function in. This framework refers to values, assumptions, principles underpinning organizational forms, every day practices, and processes which provide organizations logic that are manifested in a specific discourse, a discourse that is increasingly disciplined to comply with donors priorities and projects assessment which ultimately ensure the conformity with the goals, values, and ideologies with the donors, as well as the proper use of funds.

### *Communities*

Progressive community change is defined as people organizing themselves, confronting power with grievances and actions to change their lives. The ultimate task of community development and organizing is to mobilize disenfranchised people to advocate on their own behalf in relation to some power structure in order to achieve needed changes such as overcoming oppression and achieving liberation from the Israeli occupation. Indicators of progressive community change include democratic grassroots participation, transformative leadership, and sustainable community resources. The danger of cooptation is reversing the potential for sustainable progressive community change and the deviation of critical resources to another, isolated special interest.

### *Gender Issues*

Women's participation in the economy is important for equality, access to and control of resources, and therefore their empowerment in both the public and private spheres. Given the fact that NGOs provide opportunities for women to pool their resources to address their own

needs and thus to improve their livelihoods and status, *how do these processes play out in looking at community based gender development programs in Palestine?* As noted in Chapter 6, the issue of gender equity remains tied to program implementation. Gender mainstreaming within grassroots NGOs reveals the commitment to gender equity and social justice at a substantive level, which is represented in their mission statements and overall goals and policies. However, the structural level doesn't reveal the process of social transformation and is tied to project implementation. Thus NGOs have adopted a commitment to gender mainstreaming policies without really challenging patriarchal structures that obstruct women's participation in development processes. Therefore this did not tear into the roots of oppression and delve into the oppressive power structures of gender inequalities in order to promote the community progressive change. In community development terms, an NGO's program that leaves out half of the entire population (women) is not living up to its stated responsibilities as community development practitioners. If community development in this context is about liberation, it cannot be about liberation from one form of social oppression and domination (the Israeli occupation) only to be left with yet another form of oppression (the local level patriarchal system). While it may seem overwhelming to consider so many factors, what practitioners must always be cognizant of are those barriers, which keep individuals and groups submissive to an oppressive authority in order to ensure adherence to the commitment for social change.

#### *Community Progressive Change: Is it Possible?*

When taken as a whole, we see a replicating system, a system reinforced by the donor to the NGO service provision process, which creates funding dependency and thus reproduces this dependency in the relationships with community groups and community based organizations. The failure of these two NGOs is the lack of critically reassessing their processes (operations)

and how they are linked to their desired outcome (policy): a sovereign Palestine. NGOs must recognize they are operating within what Gramsci called a hegemonic system, one which attempts to centralize social systems. Centralized social systems will inhibit the ability of grassroots NGOs to develop tactics facing harsh Israeli repression, represented by natural resources control.

. In terms of the political opportunity structure, a hegemonic system attempts to limit the choices collective people have to challenge oppressive social systems. It also plays a critical role in shaping grassroots NGOs and their potential alignments with political factions, and deteriorates subsequent collective action and popular resistance. This reinforced system (propped up by the donors, the NGOs, and their practitioners who then influence local level community actors) continues on a downward spiral of sorts, leading the cause of *liberation* farther afield from its roots.

Is it possible to reverse these trends? These social systems are trending toward ever greater centralization. Those who commandeer the greatest amount of resources are then better equipped to materially influence the grassroots NGOs orientation as effective and cost-efficient vehicles for delivering social services in a very technical way. This then allows the materially well-off to allocate resources to psychologically influence groups and individuals. In doing so, grassroots NGOs will be excluded from playing a critical role particularly in the political sphere at the expense of community organizing.

A potential parallel stream of support could be that resources necessary to sustain struggle are appropriated by the community so as to break the bonds of dependency (the question of power). Broadening the movement fosters a left of central coalition with leftist forces. This would maintain the ideological and political orientation of grassroots NGOs, reinforce political

process and thus preserve the culture as critical sources of information that are fundamental to social progress.

The technocratic perspective is part of the problem in that the facilitation leads to unintended outcomes. Many of the individuals empowered by these NGOs often replicate the existing patriarchal structures. It becomes difficult for PARC and UAWC to confront these obvious contradictions and they instead compromise in order to demonstrate some level of success (technocratic approach).

If NGOs such as PARC and UAWC consider that development is about change, then they must be able to base their work on an understanding of that process and recognition of the implications for their actions. If NGOs, for instance, seek to work towards empowerment, they must be able to understand the causes of disempowerment and build strategies to deal with inequalities in power relations. By failing to understand this, NGOs' work will not be leading towards a process of development and thus towards a process of community change. If NGOs also such as PARC and UAWC do not take risks, then they are unintentionally failing to initiate community progressive change.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research  
Institutional Review Board  
528 East Green Street  
Suite 203  
Champaign, IL 61820



April 25, 2008

Stephen Gasteyer  
Human & Community Development  
239 Bevier Hall  
M/C 180

RE: *Building Community Agency: PalestinianGrassroots Organizations From Services to Ideological Formation*  
IRB Protocol Number: 08503

Dear Stephen:

Your response to stipulations for the project entitled *Building Community Agency: PalestinianGrassroots Organizations From Services to Ideological Formation* has satisfactorily addressed the concerns of the UIUC Institutional Review Board (IRB) and you are now free to proceed with the human subjects protocol. The UIUC IRB approved, by expedited review, the protocol as described in your IRB-1 application with stipulated changes. The expiration date for this protocol, UIUC number 08503, is 04/13/2009. The risk designation applied to your project is *no more than minimal risk*. Certification of approval is available upon request.

Copies of the enclosed date-stamped consent forms must be used in obtaining informed consent. If there is a need to revise or alter the consent forms, please submit the revised forms for IRB review, approval, and date-stamping prior to use.

Under applicable regulations, no changes to procedures involving human subjects may be made without prior IRB review and approval. The regulations also require that you promptly notify the IRB of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated side effects, adverse reactions, and any injuries or complications that arise during the project.

If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me or the IRB Office, or visit our Web site at <http://www.irb.uiuc.edu>.

Sincerely,

Sue Keehn, Director, Institutional Review Board

Enclosures

c: Tahreer Abed Araj

telephone 217-333-2670 • fax 217-333-0405 • email [IRB@uiuc.edu](mailto:IRB@uiuc.edu)

## APPENDIX B

Table 1: List of participants

Demographic of Participants			
Pseudonym	Organizational Level	Sex	District
Participant 01	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 02	Policy maker	F	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 03	Policy maker	F	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 04	Policy maker	F	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 05	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 06	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 07	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 08	Policy maker	F	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 09	Policy maker	F	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 10	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 11	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 12	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 13	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 14	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 15	Policy maker	F	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 16	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 17	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 18	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 19	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 20	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 21	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 22	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 23	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 24	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 25	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 26	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 27	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 28	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 29	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 30	Policy maker	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 31	Practitioner	M	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 32	Practitioner	F	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 33	Practitioner	F	Ramallah (mid of West Bank)
Participant 34	Practitioner	M	Tulkarim (North of West Bank)
Participant 35	Practitioner	F	Tulkarim (North of West Bank)
Participant 36	Practitioner	M	Tulkarim (North of West Bank)
Participant 37	Practitioner	M	Tulkarim (North of West Bank)
Participant 38	Practitioner	M	Jenin (North of West Bank)
Participant 39	Practitioner	M	Jenin North of West Bank)

## APPENDIX B

(cont.) Table 1: List of participants

Demographic of Participants			
Pseudonym	Organizational Level	Sex	District
Participant 40	Practitioner	F	Jenin (North of West Bank)
Participant 41	Practitioner	M	Jenin (North of West Bank)
Participant 42	Practitioner	M	Hebron (South of West Bank)
Participant 43	Practitioner	F	Hebron (South of West Bank)
Participant 44	Practitioner	F	Hebron (South of West Bank)
Participant 45	Practitioner	M	Hebron (South of West Bank)
Participant 46	Practitioner	M	Hebron (South of West Bank)
Participant 47	Practitioner	F	Hebron (South of West Bank)
Participant 48	Practitioner	F	Hebron (South of West Bank)
Participant 49	Community member	M	C1- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 50	Community member	M	C1- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 51	Community member	M	C1- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 52	Community member	M	C1- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 53	Community member	M	C1- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 54	Community member	M	C1- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 55	Community member	F	C2- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 56	Community member	F	C2- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 57	Community member	F	C2- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 58	Community member	F	C2- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 59	Community member	F	C2- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 60	Community member	F	C2- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 61	Community member	F	C2- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 62	Community member	F	C2- Tulkarim (North of WB)
Participant 63	Community member	F	C3- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 64	Community member	F	C3- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 65	Community member	M	C3- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 66	Community member	M	C3- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 67	Community member	M	C3- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 68	Community member	M	C3- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 69	Community member	M	C3- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 70	Community member	F	C4- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 71	Community member	F	C4- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 72	Community member	F	C4- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 73	Community member	F	C4- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 74	Community member	F	C4- Hebron (South of WB)
Participant 75	Community member	F	C4- Hebron (South of WB)